Can We just Write ISIS Off?

Back when ISIS was in control of vast expanses of land in Iraq and Syria, there was no shortage of smaller militant groups willing to pledge allegiance to this terrorist quasi-state. In fact, the power of ISIS propaganda was so compelling that tens of thousands of people from across 80 nations around the world would travel to the Middle East to join this organization, says the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation. Of course, the majority of those who joined ISIS had some sort of Middle Eastern background, which doesn’t negate the fact that there’s been thousands of Europeans fighting under ISIS’ black banners as well.

So what must a person who abandoned his home to fight for radical ideas be like? Most of those were condemned to a life in slums on the outskirts of large European cities, with some of those being the offspring of Middle Eastern migrants who failed to find a better life they were looking for in this far-away land, while others were alien to the Muslim faith but couldn’t come up with a better idea of making it in this life. According to statistics, Germans formed the most numerous group of outcasts in ISIS, followed in numbers by Frenchmen and Brits.

After suffering a series of rather devastating strikes made by the anti-terrorist coalition, ISIS as a quasi-state ceased to exist, however this doesn’t mean that one can confidently celebrate a victory over this terrorist organization. There’s no shortage of Jabhat al-Nusra militants operating in both Iraq and Syria who were closely affiliated with ISIS. Moreover, a fair number of militants managed to escape their doom by relocating to Afghanistan and Libya. If you were following regional affairs closely, you would know that Western powers played a major role in evacuating the commanding cadres of ISIS to Central Asia.

However, a fair number of ISIS militants decided to return home to Europe after witnessing the collapse of the monstrous entity they supported. Most of them have already managed to acquire a fair share of fighting experience in Syria, Iraq, Libya or Afghanistan.

Thus, according to a number of British MSM sources, MI-5 has been monitoring some 20,000 former militants for years. In France, there’s at least 16,000 of such people living in different cities, while Germany hosts some 10,000 Salafists on top of up to 40,000 former radical militants. It means that there’s at least some 80,000 people with a terrorist background dwelling in those three states alone, a veritable army that has enough experience to take down any force it may face should those militants be summoned.

As it’s been revealed in a briefing prepared for the European Parliament, between 2000 and 2018, 753 people lost their lives in terrorist attacks in the EU, and 1,115 EU citizens fell victim to terror in non-EU countries.

A number of attacks that were prevented by the local security agencies were designed to exact massive death tolls due to the fact that attackers were planning to use deadly chemical substances as their weapons of choice. At the same time, as it’s been pointed out in the above mentioned paper, some radicalized individuals attacked ordinary people or police forces in their own countries after pledging allegiance to ISIS on their own. Such lone-wolf attackers, with only a loose link to the Islamic State may be expected to use everyday tools such as knives or cars, and have become a growing concern as it’s getting increasingly difficult to prevent them from fulfilling their plans.

According to Die Welt, the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service is confident that Germany is going to experience the largest number of attacks launched by former ISIS militants, together with the UK, France, Belgium and Spain.

If the Sunday Times is to be believed, ISIS is planning to establish a “Bureau of Foreign Relations for the
Department of Operations in Europe” to organize, arm and fund atrocities. The files obtained by this media organization show ISIS plans new attacks in Europe, as it has planted sleeper cells across the continent which are busy forging papers, stockpiling explosives and training suicide bombers.

It’s highly disturbing that Special Operations Command (SOCOM) has revealed that it’s going to “lead the effort” aimed at preventing terrorists from obtaining mass-casualty weapons such as nuclear dirty bombs, but experts in the US intelligence community warn that operators can’t do it alone.

However, this wasn’t the first time such a daunting possibility was mentioned in the media. Previously, the Conversation would reveal that individuals affiliated with ISIS were surveilling a Belgian nuclear research facility. This announcement gave birth to speculations about the group’s nuclear ambitions resulting in Belgian authorities launching their own investigation into the matter. Yet, back in 2016 when this scandal surfaced, the EU would tell its population that terrorists could only aspire to get their hands on a dirty bomb, which wouldn’t be as devastating a device as a regular nuclear bomb anyway. A number of nuclear scientists would come forth to attest that it would take ISIS a long time to build a device similar to those that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

However, it must be pointed out that even if dirty bombs don’t produce nuclear explosions, they are still as dangerous for the general population as any other nuclear device is. Such a device exploding in a densely populated area will result in radioactive contamination that will produce mutations, an abrupt spike in cancer cases and deaths. There’s been reports of people dying within a couple of hours after receiving high doses of radiation.

It’s noteworthy that even back in the days when Bin Laden was alive, radical militants of the organization that preceded ISIS – Al-Qaeda were dreaming about building a nuclear device the size of a suitcase. Bin Laden called such devices the “doomsday weapon against the infidels” as he was convinced that with enough funding and expertise radical militants would be able to produce a number of such devices some day.

Sure, one could easily dismiss such concerns by pointing out that security agencies would never allow something resembling a nuclear terrorist attack to take place. However, one cannot dismiss the fact that as production costs keep getting lower due to technological advancements there’s nothing at this point preventing a well-funded group from building anything it knows how to build.

And extensive funding is among the things that ISIS continues to enjoy even after being destroyed as a quasi-state. Oil and drug smuggling together with human trafficking have always been extremely profitable ventures. There’s no shortage of those willing to use ISIS as a tool of subversion in the West, as it’s clear that in order to receive funding for producing even more weapons you must come up with an enemy you’re going to use these weapons against.

This shows that in spite of the defeats ISIS suffered in Iraq and Syria, this organization continues representing a major threat to a long list of state actors, including those in Europe, as almost anyone who has access to the Internet may turn out to be a member of this terrorist organization one day.

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