



ICT
International Institute
for Counter-Terrorism
With the Support of Keren Daniel

ICT Incidents and Activists Database

PERIODIC REVIEW

Summary of Terrorist Incidents and Counter-Terrorist Operations Worldwide December 2013

Highlights

- On December 4, Hassan al-Laqaes, a senior member of Hezbollah, was assassinated outside his home in Beirut. Authorities said that Al-Laqaes was the Chief of Rocket Development and responsible for Hezbollah's communication and technology networks. Two previously unknown groups, the Free Sunnis of Baalbek Battalion and the Battalion of the Muslim Umma, claimed responsibility for the attack.
- On December 5, a coordinated, two-pronged bomb and gun attack killed 56 people and wounded 216 others at the Yemeni Defence Ministry in Sana'a. On December 5, Ansar Al-Sharia, an offshoot of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) claimed responsibility for the attack. In an unusual move, on December 22, Qassim al-Raimi, the leader of AQAP, apologized for attacking the hospital within the Defence Ministry during the attack.
- On December 22, a pressure cooker bomb exploded on a bus in the Tel Aviv suburb of Bat Yam. One police officer was lightly wounded in the explosion. The Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) said that the bomb had contained two kilograms of improvised explosives surrounded by nails and screws. It was assembled in a pressure cooker and activated by mobile phone. Islamic Jihad was linked to the attack.
- On December 25, three separate bombings in Baghdad killed 38 people and wounded 70 others, as militants targeted Christians celebrating Christmas festivities. According to the authorities, the first bomb exploded in a crowded outdoor market in the Christian district of Dora. Several minutes later a bomb planted in a parked car exploded outside a nearby church as worshipers were leaving Christmas Mass. No group claimed responsibility but authorities blamed Al-Qaeda in Iraq.
- On December 29, 18 people were killed and 44 others injured when a suicide bomber attacked the Volgograd-1 train station in southern Russia. A second suicide attack took place the following morning, December 30, at 8:30 local time in the Dzerzhinsky district in Volgograd. The bombing targeted a No. 1233 trolleybus of route 15A, which connects a suburb to Volgograd's downtown area, as it was passing one of the city's markets. The attack killed 16 people, including a child, and injured 41 others. Valiat Dagestan, a militant group linked to Doku Umarov was linked to the attack.

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Europe

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On December 20, Haris Causevic was sentenced to 45 years in prison. He was convicted of carrying out a bombing on June 27, 2010 that targeted a police station in Bugojno,¹ in which one officer was killed and several others injured. According to authorities, Causevic planted an improvised explosive device by the back wall of the police station, which was detonated remotely, and he was caught running away. Causevic was also found guilty of plotting to commit other crimes, including the kidnapping of police officers and their children with the aim of forcing Bosnia to introduce strict Islamic laws. Causevic's sentence was the harshest the court has ever pronounced for terrorism in Bosnia. An alleged accomplice, Naser Palismanovic, was acquitted due to lack of evidence.² A third suspect, Adnan Haracic, was tried separately in July 2012 after he admitted to playing a role in the attack. He was then sentenced to 14 years in prison. Three other suspects were also indicted for helping the perpetrators after the explosion. They faced a separate trial.³

Greece

On December 30, unidentified gunmen firing two AK-47 assault rifles attacked the official residence of the German Ambassador to Greece, Wolfgang Dold. Police said that the ambassador was in the residence when the shots were fired but was unharmed. There were no other casualties in the attack. Police recovered more than 60 bullet casings. Greek authorities said the attack was aimed at undermining Greece's six-month presidency of the European Union, which began on January 1, 2014.⁴ No group has claimed responsibility for the attack but authorities suspected far-left terrorist groups, which had previously targeted foreign diplomats in Greece.⁵

¹ Reuters, "Bosnia court jails Islamist for 45 years over bomb attack", December 20, 2013.

² Associated Press, "Bosnian Islamic extremist given 45 years in prison for terrorist attack at police", December 20, 2013.

³ Al-Jazeera, "Bosnia jails police bomber for 45 years", December 20, 2013.

⁴ BBC, "Shots fired at German ambassador's home in Athens", December 30, 2013.

⁵ AP, "Greece: Shots outside home of German ambassador", December 30, 2013.

Russia

On December 29, 18 people were killed and 44 others injured when a suicide bomber attacked the Volgograd-1 train station in southern Russia. The city serves as the main transport hub between Moscow and southern Russia. Investigators said they also found an unexploded grenade in the station. Authorities said the bomb contained 10 kilograms of TNT explosives and shrapnel.⁶ CCTV video captured the moment the bomber detonated the explosives at around 12:45 local time, at what appeared to be the main entrance of the three-story stone building. Major damage was caused to the building.⁷ There were conflicting reports over the identity of the attacker. Initially authorities said the attack was carried out by a female suicide bomber from the Caucasus who was identified as Oksana Aslanova.⁸ However, it was later reported that further CCTV footage showed a suspicious man wearing a rucksack. Images from CCTV cameras show the man approaching the station, climbing the steps and walking inside to the metal detectors. Moments later the explosion occurred.⁹ Authorities were uncertain whether or not he was acting alone or if the woman was his accomplice.¹⁰ A second suicide attack took place the following morning, December 30, at 8:30 local time in the Dzerzhinsky district in Volgograd. The bombing targeted a No. 1233 trolleybus of route 15A, which connects a suburb to Volgograd's downtown area, as it was passing one of the city's markets. The attack killed 16 people, including a child, and injured 41 others. Authorities said that a male suspect had carried out the attack.¹¹

⁶ BBC, "Volgograd blasts: Second suicide bomb hits Russia city", December 30, 2013.

⁷ CNN, "Bombings in Russia's Volgograd: What might be behind the attacks?", December 30, 2013.

⁸ RT, "Volgograd railway station blast", December 29, 2013.

⁹ Mailonline, "New CCTV footage shows Volgograd suicide bomber acting suspiciously moments before he walked into train station and detonated himself killing 17", January 20, 2014.

¹⁰ Guardian, "Volgograd train station rocked by suicide bombing", December 29, 2013.

¹¹ BBC, "Volgograd blasts: Second suicide bomb hits Russia city", December 30, 2013. On January 19, 2014, Valiat Dagestan, a militant group linked to Doku Umarov, claimed responsibility for the attacks. The group released a 49-minute online video, in which two men holding Kalashnikov automatic rifles and standing by a black banner with Arabic religious phrases similar to those used by Al-Qaeda, claimed responsibility for the attacks and identified the suicide bombers as Suleiman and Abdurakhman. They purported to show the explosives being prepared and strapped to their bodies. They also threatened further attacks targeting the Sochi Winter Olympics. Guardian, "Islamic group claims Volgograd attacks and threatens Sochi visitors", January 20, 2014

United Kingdom

On December 14, a bomb exploded in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter at 18:45 as the area was being cleared by police, who were responding to a bomb warning sent to local media.¹² There were no casualties in the attack but authorities said that if attack had been successful it would have caused mass casualties and damage to the area, which is one of the main entertainment venues in Belfast. Authorities said the device had only partially exploded during the clearance operation.¹³ The explosion occurred as police were clearing buildings in the area, including a hotel, a bar and an arts center.¹⁴ No group claimed responsibility for the failed attack but IRA dissidents were suspected of being behind the attack.¹⁵

On December 18, Keith McConnan, 19, and Orla O'Hanlon, 18, were arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act at a residential address in Forkhill, south Armagh. Security sources confirmed reports that a cross-border security operation, which involved several days' worth of surveillance, had led the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to the house in south Armagh. Inside the house the PSNI found a grinder, which they believe was being used to mix ammonium nitrate fertilizer with sugar to create a car bomb.¹⁶ On December 21, the suspects appeared in court and were charged with making and possessing explosives with intent to endanger life or property between December 15 and December 18, 2013. The court heard that while McConnan was being taken to Antrim police station, officers found a latex glove in his hip pocket. During a search of the house, officers found a timer power unit and ancillary items in a bedroom walk-in closet, and found a bin containing ammonium nitrate on the property. In another bedroom, police also found a three-foot tall industrial coffee grinder with the capacity to grind down 20kg of home-made explosives per hour.¹⁷ Authorities said they believe the bomb was to have been used by members of the dissident group, known as ONH, in an attack that was allegedly being planned to target a

¹² Independent, "Belfast bomb in Cathedral Quarter 'could have killed or injured anyone near'", December 13, 2013.

¹³ Guardian, "Bomb explosion in Belfast as Christmas revellers evacuated from city centre", December 13, 2013.

¹⁴ CNN, "Northern Ireland leaders condemn Belfast bomb blast", December 14, 2013.

¹⁵ BBC, "Belfast Cathedral Quarter bomb 'could have killed'", December 14, 2013.

¹⁶ Guardian, "Major bomb plot foiled in Northern Ireland", December 19, 2013.

¹⁷ Belfast Telegraph, "Newry teenagers face court on bomb-making charges", December 21, 2013.

commercial center in Belfast during the Christmas shopping season.¹⁸

On December 19, Michael Adebolajo, 29, and Michael Adebowale, 22, were convicted of the murder of British soldier, Lee Rigby, near a military barracks in southeast London in May 2013. The verdict took about 90 minutes to reach at the Old Bailey Court in London. Adebolajo and Adebowale had plead not guilty to both charges. They faced sentencing in January 2014.¹⁹

Africa

Kenya

On December 10-14, a series of attacks killed 15 people. One person was killed and three others were seriously wounded when twin explosions occurred in Wajir, near the border with Somalia.²⁰

On December 10, eight Kenyans, including five policemen, were killed in an ambush by unidentified gunmen. One policeman was reported missing following the attack. On December 12, attackers hurled a grenade, which failed to explode, at a minibus carrying British tourists in Mombasa. There were no casualties in the attack.²¹ Finally, on December 14, four people were killed and 25 others were injured in a grenade attack on a minibus in Nairobi. The minibus was traveling from the Eastleigh neighborhood of Nairobi to the city center. The attacker was killed in the incident.²²

Authorities said that the suspect was being questioned over the attack, and police were trying to determine whether the explosion had been caused by a grenade or an improvised explosive device and whether it had been placed in the bus, carried by a passenger or thrown from outside. The explosion caused damage to several nearby cars, killing at least one motorist. No group claimed responsibility for the attacks. Police were uncertain if the attacks were connected but said that they may be linked to celebrations that marked Kenya's 50th anniversary of independence from Britain.²³

Libya

On December 22, a suicide car bomber targeted a security checkpoint 50 kilometers east of

¹⁸ Independent.ie, "Woman and two men held as huge bomb attack foiled", December 19, 2013.

¹⁹ CNN, "Lee Rigby murder: 2 men found guilty in UK soldier's slaying", December 19, 2013.

²⁰ AFP, "Bomb blasts in Kenya kills one", December 14, 2013.

²¹ IBT Times, "British Tourists In Mombasa Escape Grenade Attack", December 12, 2013.

²² CNN, "5 killed in Nairobi grenade attack", December 15, 2013.

²³ Al-Jazeera, "Multiple deaths, dozens injured in Nairobi bus attack", December 14, 2013.

Benghazi, killing 13 Libyan soldiers and injuring three others. Security post chief, Fraj al-Abdelli, who was wounded in the attack, said his unit had received several threats to the checkpoint following the November 2013 arrest of four militants who were carrying weapons, explosives, money and a hit-list.²⁴ Authorities said the attack was the first known suicide bomb attack in Libya since the fall of Colonel Gaddafi. No group claimed responsibility for the attack but authorities suspected Ansar Al-Shari'a militants.²⁵

Mali

On December 14, two Senegalese UN peacekeepers were killed and three others were injured when a suicide car bomber attacked a bank guarded by UN peacekeepers and set fire to a UN armored vehicle. The impact of the explosion caused the building to collapse.²⁶ No group claimed responsibility for the attack.²⁷

Nigeria

On December 2, Boko Haram militants attacked a military airbase in Maiduguri, destroying two helicopters. A 24-hour curfew was imposed in Maiduguri and the civilian airport was also briefly closed. Ministry of Defense Spokesman, Brig. Gen. Chris Olukolade, said that 24 insurgents were killed and two soldiers were wounded in the attack.²⁸

Somalia

On December 5, a suicide car bomb killed seven people and wounded 37 others in Bosasso, northern Somalia. The bomb exploded in a busy marketplace shortly after 8:00.²⁹ Authorities said the target of the attack was a convoy of vehicles carrying Puntland Marine Forces that were escorting two foreigners who were working for Saracen, a firm that had been training the Puntland

²⁴ Reuters, "At least 13 killed in Benghazi bombing", December 22, 2013.

²⁵ BBC, "Libya's first suicide attack kills seven near Benghazi", December 22, 2013.

²⁶UPI, "Two U.N. peacekeepers die in car bomb blast in northern Mali", December 14, 2013.

²⁷ BBC, "Mali unrest: Kidal attack kills two UN peacekeepers", December 14, 2013.

²⁸ BBC, "Nigeria crisis: Boko Haram attack Maiduguri airbase", December 2, 2013.

²⁹ Al-Jazeera, "Suicide bomber targets northern Somalia", December 5, 2013.

Maritime Police Force.³⁰ No group claimed responsibility for the attack but authorities blamed Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen.³¹

On December 27, 10 people were killed in Mogadishu when a remote-controlled bomb that was hidden in the back of restaurant exploded. The militants escaped before the explosion and authorities said that target of the attack was Somali government forces, who frequented the restaurant.³² No group claimed responsibility for the attack but authorities blamed Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen.³³

Middle East

Egypt

On December 2, security forces defused a car bomb in a stolen vehicle that had been detected near a gas station on the road leading to the city of Suez, near Cairo. An employee at the gas station had spotted three people parking the car and leaving on foot. Security officials said the apparent target was a passing convoy. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.³⁴

On December 24, 15 people were killed and more than 100 others were injured in a car bomb attack on a security building in the Nile Delta city of Mansoura. The explosion led to the partial collapse of the five-floor building. The car bombing was part of a series of attacks targeting security forces by militants since the military deposed President Mohammed Morsi in July 2013.³⁵ Following the attack, Mohamed Ibrahim, Egypt's Interior Minister, said that four people were arrested after admitting their involvement in the incident. Ansar Bait al-Maqdas claimed responsibility for the attack.³⁶

On December 29, another attack targeted security forces in the Nile Delta, injuring four people. Militants remotely detonated a car bomb near the military intelligence building in Sharqiyya,

³⁰ AFP, "At least 8 dead in car bomb attack in Somalia's Puntland: police", December 5, 2013.

³¹ Reuters, "Car bomb explodes in Somalia's Puntland region: witnesses", December 5, 2013.

³² New York Times, "Deadly Bomb Attack Rocks a Restaurant in Somalia's Capital", December 27, 2013.

³³ Al-Jazeera, "Al-Shabab suspected in deadly Somalia bombing", December 27, 2013.

³⁴ AFP, "Car bomb defused near Cairo", December 2, 2013.

³⁵ BBC, "Egypt violence: Deadly car bomb hits security site", December 24, 2013.

³⁶ Al-Jazeera, "Deadly blast rocks Egyptian police station", December 24, 2013.

causing partial damage to the building. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.³⁷

On December 26, five people were injured when a bomb exploded close to a public bus in Cairo. The bomb was planted on a pedestrian island and exploded as the bus passed by in the northern district of Nasr City. The attack happened the day after the government declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization. According to investigating prosecutors and eyewitnesses, the bus had broken down, causing many passengers to disembark and seek alternative transport just minutes before the bomb detonated. Authorities said they also discovered at least one more bomb attached to an advertisement billboard, apparently intended to hit security forces who responded to the first attack.³⁸ No group claimed responsibility for the attack.³⁹

Iraq

On December 4, 19 people were killed and 79 others were injured when a team of suicide bombers and gunmen attacked the police intelligence headquarters in Kirkuk and then attacked the nearby Jawahir shopping mall.⁴⁰ Guards at the entrance of the intelligence building attempted to stop the bombers and engaged in a battle with some of the militants. According to authorities, five militants were killed. The remaining attackers, some of them wearing suicide vests, stormed the shopping mall and took approximately 20 people hostage. Some of the militants opened fire on Iraqi forces stationed outside the mall, leading to another gun battle that lasted several hours. Authorities managed to free 11 of the hostages.⁴¹ Several explosions took place during the gunfights and the building was severely damaged. The Islamic State of Iraq claimed responsibility for the attacks.⁴²

On December 8, a series of car bombs killed 45 people across Iraq and wounded more than 120 others, mainly targeting crowded markets, commercial districts and car repair shops in and around Baghdad.⁴³ The worst attack took place in the predominantly Shi'ite Muslim district of Bayaa in Baghdad, when a bomb in a parked vehicle exploded near car repair shops, killing seven people and

³⁷ NBC, "Egypt unrest: Bomb hits army intelligence building, wounds four soldiers", December 29, 2013.

³⁸ AP, "Bomb blast hits bus in Egypt's capital, wounding 5", December 26, 2013.

³⁹ ahramonline, "Bus explodes in Cairo's Nasr City, leaving 5 injured", December 26, 2013.

⁴⁰ RT, "At least 19 killed in Iraqi mall, intel HQ attacks, as siege ends", December 4, 2013.

⁴¹ AFP, "Iraq Forces End Kirkuk Mall Siege, Release Hostages", December 5, 2013.

⁴² AFP, "Iraq Forces End Kirkuk Mall Siege, Release Hostages", December 5, 2013

⁴³ RT, "At least 45 killed, 120 wounded in string of Iraq bombings", December 8, 2013.

wounding 14 others. An attack on another car repair shop in Taji killed three people and wounded 10 others. Following that explosion, a car bomb detonated in a busy square in central Baghdad, killing five people and wounding 15 others. In Radhwaniya, a roadside bomb killed two people and wounded eight others. Authorities also said that explosions were reported in Baghdad's mainly Shi'ite districts of Amel, Ghadir, Sadr City, Ameen and Hussainiya. In Baquba, a bomb in a parked car exploded inside a market, killing two people and wounding seven others. No group claimed responsibility for the attacks but authorities blamed Al-Qaeda-linked militants.⁴⁴

On December 9, a series of attacks took place in Iraq. In the worst attack, a bomb exploded outside a cafe in the town of Buhruz, south of Baquba, killing 11 people and wounding 22 others.⁴⁵ A roadside bomb targeted an army patrol south of Baghdad, killing one Iraqi soldier and wounding two others. In Baghdad's eastern Basmaya district, a bomb at an outdoor market killed three people and wounded seven others. In a village just north of Baghdad, three policemen were killed and 10 were wounded when a car bomb exploded near a checkpoint. No group claimed responsibility for the attacks but authorities blamed Al-Qaeda-linked militants.⁴⁶

On December 16, a series of attacks throughout Iraq killed 60 people. In the worst single attack, a suicide car bomber detonated his explosives outside the main gate of a police station in Beeji. Three suicide bombers then stormed the police station and detonated their explosive vests, killing eight policemen and wounding five others. In Baghdad, a double car bombing killed 23 Shia pilgrims and wounded 55 others in the southern suburb of Al-Rasheed, as they were walking to the holy city of Karbala. In the southeastern Bayaa neighborhood, a parked car bomb killed six civilians and wounded 12 others. Another parked car bomb exploded in the central Salhia neighborhood near the heavily fortified Green zone, killing five civilians and wounding 14 others. In Baghdad's central Sadriyah neighborhood, four civilians were killed and 11 others were wounded near a bus station in the nearby al-Nahda area, killing three people and wounding seven others. In Hussainiyah, one person was killed and seven others were injured when a bomb exploded. A car bomb in the southeastern suburb of Jisr Diyala killed two people and wounded seven others. Meanwhile gunmen opened fire on a bus in Mosul that was carrying pilgrims travelling to Karbala, killing 11

⁴⁴ Reuters, "Car bomb attacks across Iraq kill at least 39", December 8, 2013.

⁴⁵ AFP, "Car bomb near cafe in central Iraq kills 11", December 9, 2013.

⁴⁶ Reuters, "Car bomb attacks across Iraq kill at least 39", December 9, 2013.

people and wounding eight others. In the northern city of Tikrit, three suicide bombers detonated their explosive belts in an attempt to break into the building of the city council. Two civilians were killed and seven were wounded. No group claimed responsibility for the attacks but authorities blamed Al-Qaeda in Iraq.⁴⁷

On December 18, a suicide bomber detonated an explosives belt among Shia pilgrims in the Khales area of Baquba, killing five people and wounding 10 others. Authorities said that one of the victims was a policeman tasked with guarding the pilgrims, who embraced the bomber just before the attack in an effort to shield others from the explosion. No group claimed responsibility for the attack but authorities blamed Al-Qaeda in Iraq.⁴⁸

On December 19, 29 people were killed when three suicide bomb attacks targeting Shia pilgrims travelling to the Iraqi city of Karbala for a religious event that commemorated the end of the 40 days of mourning for the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Hussein. In the first attack, a suicide bomber detonated explosives in a crowd of Shia pilgrims on the main road leading south from Baghdad to Karbala, killing 10 people. Another suicide bomber also targeted Shia pilgrims at a different location on the same road, killing 10 additional people. A third suicide bomber detonated explosives at a tent which had been set up to offer services for the pilgrims, killing 14 more people and injuring 28 others. No group claimed responsibility for the attacks.⁴⁹

On December 25, three separate bombings in Baghdad killed 38 people and wounded 70 others as militants targeted Christians celebrating Christmas. Authorities said the first bomb exploded in a crowded outdoor market in the Christian district of Dora. Several minutes later, a bomb in a parked car exploded outside a nearby church as worshipers were leaving Christmas Mass. No group claimed responsibility but authorities blamed Al-Qaeda in Iraq.⁵⁰

Israel and the West Bank

On December 22, a pressure cooker bomb exploded on a bus in Bat Yam. One police officer was

⁴⁷ AP, "Suicide bombers kill 60 people in wave of attacks across Iraq", December 16, 2013.

⁴⁸ AFP, "Iraq police hero sacrifices himself to save pilgrims", December 18, 2013.

⁴⁹ BBC, "Three suicide bomb attacks target Shia pilgrims in Iraq", December 19, 2013.

⁵⁰ Reuters, "Christmas Bomb Attacks Kill at Least 34 in Baghdad's Christian Areas", December 25, 2013.

lightly wounded in the explosion.⁵¹ Major casualties were averted, however, because a few minutes prior to the explosion a passenger noticed a suspicious bag. He examined it and discovered that it contained a pressure cooker with electrical wires. He immediately alerted the bus driver and everyone exited the vehicle. The device detonated three minutes after the last passengers had been evacuated.⁵² Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) said the bomb contained two kilograms of improvised explosives surrounded by nails and screws. It was assembled in a pressure cooker and activated by a mobile phone.⁵³

On December 23, an Israeli police officer was stabbed in the back near the West Bank settlement of Adam. Authorities said the officer and his partner were directing traffic at a busy intersection where an accident had taken place. Israeli forces opened fire at the suspect but he managed to escape. A few hours after the incident, Kobi Cohen, Police District Commander, said that the Palestinian suspect had evaded capture and escaped to the adjacent Palestinian village of Jaba.⁵⁴

Lebanon

On December 4, Hassan al-Laqaes, a senior member of Hezbollah, was assassinated outside his home in Beirut. The local media reported that al-Laqaes was shot five times in the head and neck in his car outside his home by at least one gunman, minutes after a live interview aired on television

⁵¹ MFA, "Tragedy averted in bus bombing in Bat Yam", December 22, 2013.

⁵² Jerusalem Post, "Passengers escape Bat Yam bus shortly before bomb explodes ", December 22, 2013.

⁵³ Times of Israel, "Thwarted Israeli bus blast similar to Boston bombings", January 3, 2014. On January 2, 2014, the Shin Bet announced that it had arrested four Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives for the bombing, including a Palestinian Authority police officer. The militants admitted that they had planned to carry out a second, larger bombing in Tel Aviv. They were named as Yusef Salamah, 22, Shehada Ta'amri, 24, Hamdi Ta'amri, 21 and Sami Harimi, 20. Shehada and Hamdi Ta'amri, brothers, have both served time in Israeli prisons; Hamdi, the younger of the two, is a Palestinian Authority police officer who was in the middle of officer's candidate school in Jericho. Harimi caught a ride with a Bedouin citizen of Israel who earned money transporting illegals into Israel to work. Harimi had been working illegally in a bakery in Jaffa. According to the Shin Bet, Harimi went to pray in a mosque and then boarded the bus. He left the bag near the center of the vehicle and got off at an unspecified stop. He then called a cell phone that was attached to the explosive device, detonating the bomb. By that time, the bomb had been spotted and the bus evacuated, averting the bombers' intended heavy death toll see Jerusalem Post, "Security forces nab Islamic Jihad members suspected of planting Bat Yam bus bomb", January 3, 2013.

⁵⁴ Jerusalem Post, "Policeman stabbed near Jerusalem in apparent terror attack", December 23, 2013.

with Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah. Authorities said that al-Laqaees was the Chief of Rocket Development and responsible for Hezbollah's communication and technology networks. Hezbollah blamed Israel for the assassination but Israel denied any role in the incident.⁵⁵ A previously unknown group calling itself the Free Sunnis of Baalbek Battalion claimed responsibility for the attack, saying the "jihadist operation was implemented by Free Sunni lions from Lebanon". Later, another previously unknown group calling itself the Battalion of the Muslim Umma also claimed responsibility for the attack. Authorities said that al-Laqaees was the most senior Hezbollah member killed since the February 2008 car bombing in Damascus, Syria, that killed senior commander Imad Mughniyeh.⁵⁶

On December 27, a car bomb exploded in Beirut, killing Mohamad Chatah, a former Lebanese Minister of Finance and Ambassador to the United States, and seven others. 71 people were injured in the attack. Authorities said that Chatah was known to be a staunch critic of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Hezbollah.⁵⁷ According to authorities, the bomb contained more than 50 kilograms of explosives and was placed inside a stolen Honda vehicle. The car bomb exploded as Chatah's convoy passed by at about 9:40.⁵⁸ Witnesses said that a restaurant and coffee shop were destroyed in the explosion, and several cars were set alight. No group claimed responsibility for the incident.⁵⁹

Syria

On December 3, four people were killed and 17 others injured when a suicide bomber detonated his explosive belt next to an office building in the Jisr Al-Abyad area of Damascus. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.⁶⁰

On December 22, seven people, including five children, were killed when a car bomb exploded near

⁵⁵Washington Post, "Hezbollah commander Hassan al-Laqaees assassinated outside his Beirut home", December 4, 2013.

⁵⁶WSJ, "Hezbollah Commander Killed in Lebanon", December 4, 2013.

⁵⁷Jerusalem Post, "At least 23 killed in explosions targeting Iranian embassy in Beirut", December 27, 2013

⁵⁸Independent, "Lebanon: Hezbollah critic Mohamad Chatah's murder blamed on Shia militant movement ", December 28, 2013.

⁵⁹ABC, "Beirut car bombing kills former minister Mohamad Chatah, who opposed Syria's Assad", December 28, 2013.

⁶⁰CNN, "Report: Suicide bombing in Syrian capital kills 4", December 3, 2013.

a primary school in Homs. The majority of the casualties were students and teachers.⁶¹ The explosion destroyed nearby buildings. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.⁶²

Yemen

On December 5, a coordinated two-pronged bomb and gun attack killed 56 people and wounded 216 others at the Yemeni Defense Ministry in Sana'a.⁶³ The attack began when gunmen killed four guards surrounding the ministry compound. After the gate was opened, a suicide bomber drove an explosive-laden car into the western entrance of the Defense Ministry complex. This was followed by a coordinated attack by militants in another car. The gunmen entered the compound and attacked the Al-Oradi Hospital inside, shooting at patients and doctors. Another coordinated attack and gunfight outside the complex took place several hours later, during the late afternoon. Some of the dead were foreign medics, including German, Vietnamese, Indian, Filipino nationals.⁶⁴ On December 5, Ansar Al-Sharia, an offshoot of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), claimed responsibility for the attack.⁶⁵ On December 22, Qassim al-Raimi, leader of AQAP, apologized for the attack on the hospital and said that the attackers had been instructed not to assault the hospital or mosque in an attack against the Yemeni Ministry of Defense compound, but that one fighter had made a mistake and attacked the hospital. The apology came after Yemeni government officials released surveillance video showing the hospital under attack.⁶⁶

On December 31, three Yemeni soldiers were killed when a suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden vehicle at a police headquarters in Aden.⁶⁷ Militants then attempted to force their way into the compound, but police prevented them from entering the building. Two militants were arrested and admitted to having links with Al-Qaeda.⁶⁸

North America

United States

On December 14, Terry Loewen, 58, was arrested in the culmination of a six-month long FBI sting

⁶¹ Al-Jazeera, "Syrian bombing kills children near school", December 22, 2013.

⁶² AP, "6 killed in bombing near primary school in Syria", December 22, 2013.

⁶³ AP, "Yemen: Saudis among Defense Ministry attackers", December 6, 2013.

⁶⁴ BBC, "Deadly attacks hit Yemen defence ministry in Sanaa", December 5, 2013.

⁶⁵ AFP, "52 Killed as Militants Storm Yemen Defense Complex", 5 December 2013.

⁶⁶ CNN, "Al Qaeda: We're sorry about Yemen hospital attack", December 22, 2013.

⁶⁷ BBC, "Yemeni soldiers killed in Aden suicide car bombing", December 31, 2013.

⁶⁸ Al-Jazeera, "Soldiers killed by suicide bomber in Yemen", December 31, 2013.

operation, at the Wichita Mid-Continent Airport in Kansas as he attempted to enter the airport tarmac with what he believed was a 'bomb-laden vehicle'.⁶⁹ Loewen, who worked as an avionics technician, had a security access card for the airport. He had been in email contact with who he believed was an AQAP militant, but was in fact an FBI agent. He expressed in emails his desire to carry out a suicide mission on behalf of Al-Qaeda. Authorities said that he had studied the airport's layout, took photos of various access points and researched flight schedules in order to determine when there would be the most passengers, and then passed on the information to the FBI agent. The agent helped Loewen with the construction of the device, which unknown to Loewen, was inactive. Loewen left a letter dated December 11, 2013 for a family member, describing his intent to carry out a suicide mission.⁷⁰ Loewen was charged with attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction, attempting to damage property and attempting to provide support to the terrorist group, Al-Qaeda. According to the criminal complaint, he admitted to having being self-radicalized by the online teachings of the late AQAP leader, Anwar al-Awlaki. If convicted on all counts, he faces life in prison.⁷¹

On December 27, Sinh Vinh Ngo Nguyen (aka Hasan Abu Omar Ghannoum), 24, pleaded guilty to one count of attempting to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization.⁷² He was arrested in Santa Ana on October 11, 2013 as he was waiting to board a bus to Mexico. Authorities claimed that he was planning to travel to Mexico and was carrying a false passport, a plane ticket from Mexico to Peshawar, Pakistan, and a computer hard drive containing more than 180 weapons-training videos. As part of his plea deal, Nguyen admitted that he had travelled to Syria in 2012 and joined opposition forces. Federal authorities said that Nguyen met with an undercover FBI agent who he believed was an Al-Qaeda recruiter between August 3, 2013 and October 11, 2013. Nguyen gave the FBI agent a photo of himself and a passport application with false information. Nguyen also agreed to train 30 Al-Qaeda fighters in Pakistan for five to six weeks. After returning to the U.S., he told associates that he had offered to train Al-Qaeda forces in Syria but had been turned down. On October 1, he allegedly purchased a plane ticket to travel from

⁶⁹ CNN, "Arrest made in attempt to bomb Wichita airport, FBI says", December 14, 2013.

⁷⁰ Reuters, "US arrests would-be suicide bomber who targeted Kansas airport", 14 December 2013.

⁷¹ ADL, "Terry Lee Loewen Planned Airport Bombing For Al Qaeda", December 14, 2013.

⁷² LATimes, "O.C. man admits to terrorism, plans to train Al Qaeda in Pakistan", December 27, 2013.

Mexico to Peshawar, Pakistan.⁷³ If convicted, Nguyen faces a maximum penalty of 15 years in federal prison and he is to be sentenced on March 21, 2014.⁷⁴

South America

Venezuela

On December 14, Venezuelan authorities received a tip by French authorities that a terrorist group was planning to detonate an explosive device mid-air on Flight 385 from Caracas to Paris.⁷⁵ Venezuela's Interior Minister, Miguel Rodriguez, said that 65 technicians, bomb experts and a canine team had performed an exhaustive search of the aircraft and the terminal but it turned out to be a hoax. The precise nature of the bomb threat was not revealed to the public and no group claimed responsibility.⁷⁶

Asia

Afghanistan

On December 11, a suicide bomber attacked a convoy of German troops near the international airport in Kabul. The attacker was killed and there were no International Security Assistance Force *casualties* (ISAF). The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack in a text message sent by Spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid.⁷⁷

On December 25, the United States Embassy in Kabul was targeted by two rockets fired by Taliban militants. There were no reports of casualties at the embassy but Afghan officials said that another two rockets had hit other parts of the city. Three police officers were wounded when one of the rockets, which had not exploded on impact, detonated as they were trying to defuse it. The other rocket, which did explode on impact, did not cause any casualties or significant damage. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.⁷⁸

⁷³ AP, "Sinh Vinh Ngo Nguyen Pleads Guilty To Terror Count", December 27, 2013.

⁷⁴ KTLA, "In Guilty Plea, O.C. Man Admits Plan to Train al-Qaida Fighters in Pakistan", December 27, 2013.

⁷⁵ Telegraph, "Venezuela grounds Air France flight over terror threat", December 15, 2013.

⁷⁶ AP, "No Bomb Found On Grounded Air France Airplane In Venezuela", December 16, 2013.

⁷⁷ Reuters, "Suicide bomber attacks German troops near airport in Afghan capital", December 11, 2013.

⁷⁸ Reuters, "Rockets Fired by Taliban Hit U.S. Embassy in Kabul", December 25, 2013.

Pakistan

On December 17, a suicide bomber killed three people and wounded 14 others outside a Shi'ite Imambargah (hall) in Rawalpindi. Authorities said policemen spotted a suspicious looking individual on a motorcycle in the parking lot of the Imambargah near the Nur Khan Air Base. The attacker detonated when the policemen tried to tackle him. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.⁷⁹

Thailand

On December 22, three bombs exploded in southern Thailand, injuring 27 people, four of them seriously. According to police, the most damage was caused by a car bomb outside of a hotel in Songkhla, in which nine people were injured. Two other bombs concealed on motorcycles exploded outside two police stations, injuring more than two dozen people. Police said that they were checking CCTV footage, and forensic teams were investigating the three bomb sites. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.⁸⁰

Oceania

Australia

On December 3, two men from Sydney were arrested for allegedly recruiting militants to travel to Syria to join jihad with the Al-Nusra Front.⁸¹ Police said that the arrests were the culmination of a four-month long investigation. One of the men, identified as Hamdi Alqudsi, 39, was accused of recruiting six men and facilitating their travel to Syria. The second man, identified as Amin Iman Mohamed, 23, faced four charges of terrorism, including undertaking preparations to travel to Syria. According to Australian Federal Police Deputy Commissioner of National Security, Peter Drennan, the whereabouts of the other suspects were not known.⁸²

⁷⁹ AFP, "Bomb kills three near Shiite mosque in Pakistan", December 17, 2013.

⁸⁰ AFP, "Over 20 wounded in car bomb in Thai south", December 22, 2013.

⁸¹ The Australian, "Sydney men 'planned to join Syria war'", December 3, 2013.

⁸² Guardian, "Australians fighting in Syria: two men arrested in Sydney after police raids", December 3, 2013.

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Founded in 1996, the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) is one of the leading academic institutes for counter-terrorism in the world, facilitating international cooperation in the global struggle against terrorism. ICT is an independent think tank providing expertise in terrorism, counter-terrorism, homeland security, threat vulnerability and risk assessment, intelligence analysis and national security and defense policy. ICT is a non-profit organization located at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya, Israel which relies exclusively on private donations and revenue from events, projects and programs.

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