



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

ICT Incident and Activists Database

PERIODIC REVIEW

Summary of Terrorist Incidents and Counter-Terrorist Operations Worldwide March 2015

Highlights

- On March 2, Israeli authorities announced they had arrested four Israeli businessmen who were suspected of selling building materials to Hamas militants in Gaza, enabling Hamas to rebuild its terrorist infrastructure, following Operation Protective Edge. The arrests were the culmination of a joint security effort by Israeli authorities that included: the police, the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet), the IDF, the Ministry of Defense and the Tax Authority. The majority of the suspects confessed and claimed they were motivated by financial incentives.
- On March 6, 10 people were injured at a railway station in Guangzhou, China. According to witnesses the militants were armed with knives and attacked passengers during the morning rush hour. One suspect was fatally shot by police and another was arrested. No group claimed responsibility for the incident.
- On March 7, a grenade attack at La Terrasse bar in Bernako, Mali killed five people and wounded nine others. Al Mourabitoun group claimed responsibility for the attack.
- On March 8, the Chadian military carried out a significant counter-terrorist operation against Boko Haram militants in Nigeria.
- On March 9, authorities said unidentified gunmen attacked the al-Ghani oil field in Libya. Nine foreign workers were taken hostage and it was reported that the militants beheaded eight guards who were stationed at the site. Authorities said the militants also attempted to attack the al-Zoueitina oil field nearby, but were stopped by the military. No group claimed responsibility but authorities blamed the IS.
- On March 11, Canadian authorities said they foiled a plot by Jahanzeb Malik, 33, to bomb the US consulate and other buildings in Toronto's financial district. Malik was arrested.
- On March 13, Spanish police arrested eight suspected militants, who were charged with recruiting militants to join IS, during a nationwide counter-terrorism raid.
- On March 17, the Ibn Sina Hospital in Sirte, Libya was attacked by approximately 30 IS militants. Hospital staff who were waiting for a bus to take them to Tripoli were the main target of the attack and were taken hostage. The IS later released the medical workers however, under the condition that they would medically attend to wounded IS members and that they were not allowed to leave Sirte.

- On March 18, the Bardo National Museum in Tunisia was attacked by three IS gunmen, who targeted tourists outside the museum, killing 21 people and injuring 50 others. Two gunmen were killed by authorities and a third escaped. Following the attack, Tunisian authorities arrested nine suspects initially and an additional 23, a week later. IS claimed responsibility.
- On March 20, 142 people were killed and 351 others were injured, in a coordinated suicide bombing attack that involved four-five (reports varied on the number of attackers) suspected IS militants targeting Shia Mosques in Saana. The attacks occurred as many Huthis rebels were attending prayers and they were the target of the incident. One suicide bomber detonated in the Badr mosque in southern Sanaa while another targeted worshippers as they attempted to escape. A third suicide bomber targeted Al-Hashush mosque in northern Sanaa. In an online statement, a previously unknown Sanaa branch of IS claimed responsibility for the attack, although it was not confirmed by Yemen authorities.
- On March 26, in Mogadishu, Somalia, 17 people were killed and 28 others wounded when six attackers stormed the Maka al Mukarama hotel, which is often frequented by diplomats. Security forces killed the six gunmen. On March 28, Al-Shabab al-Mujahedeen militant group claimed responsibility for the attack.

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Europe

France

On March 9, four people were arrested and charged with suspected links to Amedy Coulibaly, the perpetrator of the kosher supermarket attack that took place in Paris on January 9, 2015.¹ French authorities said a policewoman was among the four suspects. According to the French national police she worked at the Police intelligence department, Fort de Rosny-sous-Bois in northeast of Paris.² She was allegedly the girlfriend of one of the other suspects, who police identified only as Amar. This man was allegedly a close friend of Coulibaly and authorities suspected he may have carried out surveillance on the supermarket, prior to the attack. The policewoman was allegedly suspected of having access to confidential police files about Amar and following the attacks, authorities believe she gave the file to him.³ Additionally, six other people were arrested suspected of providing assistance to Coulibaly and Said and Cherif Kouachi as they carried out the January 2015 attacks. The investigation is ongoing.⁴

Spain

On March 13, Spanish police carried out nationwide counter-terrorist operations and arrested eight suspected militants who they believe were recruiting militants to go to Iraq and Syria, with the likelihood that they were to join the IS. The police carried out raids in the cities of Barcelona, Girona, Ciudad Real and Avila.⁵ The Spanish Interior ministry said the suspects included six men and two women, who all were Spanish nationals, and five had a Moroccan heritage.⁶

On March 31, two teenagers and their parents were arrested in the town of Badalona suspected of supporting terrorist activities on behalf of the IS. The parents of the teenagers originated from

¹ See January 2015 ICT database report

² AP, "French police arrest suspects linked to Paris hostage-taker", March 9, 2015

³ IBT, "Paris Charlie Hebdo Attacks: Police Arrest 4 Over Alleged Connections To Terror Cell", March 9, 2015

⁴ BBC, "Paris attacks: Four arrests linked to gunman Coulibaly", March 9, 2015

⁵ , Bloomberg, "Spain Police Arrest Eight Suspected Jihadist Terrorists", March 13, 2015

⁶ Reuters, "Spain arrests eight suspected Islamist militants in dawn raid", March 13, 2015

Morocco.⁷ The Spanish Interior ministry said the teenagers had stopped attending school in Badalona and as they became more radicalized, they begun studying at an Islamic center in Morocco. They were allegedly planning to travel through Morocco to Turkey and from there onto Syria and according to authorities their family had full knowledge of their plans.⁸

United Kingdom

On March 12, Silhan Ozcelik, 18, appeared at a hearing at Westminster Magistrates' Court charged with attempting to join the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Ozcelik was arrested at Stansted Airport on January 16, 2015 after arriving to the UK on a flight from Germany. She faced one charge of engaging in conduct in preparation for giving effect to an intention to commit acts of terrorism, under section 5 of the British Terrorism Act 2006.⁹

On March 15, British authorities were alerted that three British teenagers had gone missing and they were suspected of travelling to Turkey, intent on continuing their journey to Syria, to join the IS. The teenagers, aged 17 and 19, were returned to the UK by Turkish authorities. They were arrested upon arrival at Stansted airport. Police were first alerted to the case when the two 17 year old boys were reported missing. As part of the investigation, it appeared that the boys met a 19 year old, whom they travelled with from the UK to Spain and then onto Turkey. Turkish authorities had received intelligence from their British counter-parts, leading to their deportation back to the UK and eventual arrest.¹⁰ As part of this investigation, on March 19, a female British suspect was arrested at Luton airport, as she arrived from Istanbul, Turkey. She was also suspected of planning to travel to Syria, intent on joining the IS. All of the suspects were charged with instigating and preparing terrorist acts.¹¹

⁷ Reuters, "Spain arrests four including two teens planning to travel to Syria", March 31, 2015

⁸ Ibid,

⁹ Sky News, "Woman Remanded On Syria Terrorism Charge", March 12, 2015

¹⁰ BBC, "Turkey sends teenagers back to UK after Syria attempt", March 15, 2015

¹¹ Guardian, "British woman arrested by counter-terror officers at Luton airport", March 19, 2015

Africa

Ceuta

On March 10, Spanish authorities arrested two men in Ceuta and dismantled a militant cell which authorities believe were plotting an attack in Spain or in bordering countries. Police said the cell was already in the operational stages of the plot.¹² The Spanish Interior Ministry said the two men were Spanish citizens of Moroccan origin.¹³ The suspects allegedly had ties to the IS and had been in contact with IS militants over the Internet. These arrests were part of an ongoing police inquiry that led to four other arrests in January 2015.¹⁴

Chad

On March 8, the Chadian military launched a counter-terrorist operation against Boko Haram militants in Nigeria.¹⁵ The Chadian army said in a statement that approximately “300 vehicles, including army jeeps with heavy weapons as well as water and fuel trucks” were used in the offensive.¹⁶ Few details were made public by the military but authorities said the troops were attacking fighters from the armed group in Nigeria's Borno state, without giving details of the sites.¹⁷ On March 22, Chadian ground forces attacked Boko Haram militants' hideouts along the border with Niger. Military helicopters assisted in the operation. Authorities also said the Chadian air strikes killed several dozen Boko Haram militants in the Nigerian village of Djaboullam. However, the identity of the slain militants was not made public.¹⁸

¹² Reuters, “Spain arrests two suspected militants in Ceuta”, March 10, 2015

¹³ New York Times, “Spain Says Arrested Pair Were Part of Terrorist Plot”, March 10, 2015

¹⁴ See ICT database January 2015 report for further details.

¹⁵ BBC, “Boko Haram conflict: Nigerian allies launch offensive”, March 8, 2015

¹⁶ Reuters, “Chad, Niger launch joint offensive against Boko Haram in Nigeria”, March 8, 2015

¹⁷ Al-Jazeera, “Chad, Niger to launch joint offensive against Boko Haram in Nigeria”, March 8, 2015

¹⁸ IBT, “Boko Haram Update: Chad Bombs Islamist Militants In Nigeria, Several Dozen Killed”, March 22, 2015

Kenya

On March 30, three women, identified as Ummul-Khayr Sadir Abdull, (from Zanzibar), Maryam Said Aboud and Khadija Abubakar Abdulkadir,¹⁹ were arrested in the town of Elwak on the Kenya-Somalia border. Authorities said that the women were travelling to Somalia with the intent of becoming Al-Shabab Al-Mujihdeen suicide bombers. The three suspects were allegedly radicalized via social media sites on the internet.²⁰ Two of the women were citizens of Kenya and the third was from Tanzania. All were aged around 20 and were students.²¹

Libya

On March 9, the al-Ghani oil field was attacked by a team of gunmen who took nine foreign workers hostage. It was reported eight security guards who were guarding the facility were beheaded by the attackers.²² Amongst those taken hostage were foreign workers who worked on site including: Four Filipinos, an Austrian, a Bangladeshi, a Czech and a Ghanaian national. Authorities said the militants attempted to attack a second oil field in al-Zoueitina, but the military and security forces managed to stop them. No group claimed responsibility but authorities blamed the IS.²³

On March 12, a car bomb exploded in Tripoli's Dahmani neighborhood,²⁴ by a police station located near the Foreign Ministry in central Tripoli. Authorities said there were no casualties but significant damage was caused to the surrounding buildings and cars. The IS claimed responsibility for the incident via a post on Twitter.²⁵

On March 17, the Ibn Sina Hospital was attacked by a group of approximately 30 IS gunmen in Sirte,

¹⁹ Xinhua, "Kenya arrests 3 women over terrorism links", March 30, 2015

²⁰ Shabelle News, "arrests three women over terror links", March 30, 2015

²¹ Daily Nation, "Women linked to Al-Shabaab arrested as they sneak to Somalia", March 30, 2015

²² Reuters, "Gunmen attack Libya's Al Ghani oilfield, kill eight guards -NOC spokesman", March 9, 2015

²³ BBC, "Libya violence: Foreign oil workers 'kidnapped'", March 12, 2015

²⁴ Xinhua, "Car bomb hits police station in Libya's Tripoli", March 12, 2015

²⁵ Reuters, "Islamic State militants claim bomb attack in Libyan capital", March 12, 2015

as hospital staff were waiting to for a bus to transport them to Tripoli.²⁶ Authorities said the majority of hostages were foreign nationals from the Philippines, India, the Ukraine, and Serbia. The workers were later released under the condition that they would medically attend to wounded IS members.²⁷

Mali

On March 7, a grenade exploded, followed by gunfire at the La Terrasse bar in Bamako. Witnesses said the militants reportedly shouted "God is Great" in Arabic ("Allahu Akbar") before shooting at civilians in the bar, killing five people and injuring nine others.²⁸ Authorities said a French national and a Belgian security official working for the EU were amongst the casualties. The attackers' allegedly escaped, three of them drove off in a car and the fourth attacker escaped on a motorbike.²⁹ An al-Qaeda linked group called Al Mourabitoun claimed responsibility for the attack.³⁰

On March 8, a multi-pronged rocket attack was launched by unidentified militants who targeted the UN base in Kidal. Authorities said the attack killed three people, including a UN soldier, and 12 civilians were wounded. According to UN officials at the base, militants, who were located in both southern and northern positions near the base, fired approximately 30 rockets, including mortars and shells.³¹ Several rockets also landed in an adjacent Tuareg and Arab camp, causing the majority of the casualties. No group claimed responsibility for the incident.³²

²⁶ IBT, "Top Isis Libya commander killed in battle for Sirte while Filipino nurses confirmed safe", March 17, 2015

²⁷ CNN, "Official: ISIS attacks Libyan hospital, kidnaps -- then frees -- 20 foreigners", March 17, 2015

²⁸ BBC, "Mali bar attack kills five in Bamako", March 7, 2015

²⁹ AFP, "Five dead in suspected terror attack in Mali nightclub", March 7, 2015

³⁰ It should be noted in May 2015, the group pledged its allegiance with the IS Reuters, "Sahara's al-Mourabitoun pledges allegiance to Islamic State - report", May 14, 2015

³¹ BBC, "Rocket attack hits Kidal UN base in northern Mali", March 8, 2015

³² Reuters, "At least three people killed in attack on Mali's Kidal-sources", March 8, 2015

Nigeria

It should be noted that during March 2015, a West African coalition force continued a counter-terrorism offensive against Boko Haram militants in Nigeria. The counter offensive started in early 2015.³³ On March 8, Nigerian and Chadian troops launched a ground and air offensive against the Boko Haram Islamist militants in the Borno state region.³⁴ Residents said artillery fire and fighter jets pushed back the Boko Haram insurgents into the Damasak district of Nigeria, which is a Boko Haram stronghold.³⁵

On March 7, several coordinated explosions were reported in Maiduguri, resulting in 50 people being killed and 56 others wounded. In the first incident, authorities said a suicide bomber in a rickshaw detonated at the Baga fish market. Following this incident, two female suicide bombers exploded devices at the town's Monday Market (a local shopping area.) One had a bomb strapped to her body that detonated as she was being scanned at the gate leading into the market. Another woman exploded the bomb she was carrying in a bag. The third explosion occurred at the Borno Express bus station where it is reported that there were two explosions.³⁶ No group claimed responsibility for the incident but authorities blamed Boko Haram.³⁷

On March 9, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau officially pledged their allegiance to the IS and several days later, the pledge was accepted by the IS leadership.³⁸ The announcement was made on the Internet.³⁹

On March 16, the Nigerian military continued their efforts against the Boko Haram militants and

³³ <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/3/8/chad-boko-haram.html>

³⁴ BBC, "Boko Haram conflict: Nigerian allies launch offensive", March 8, 2015

³⁵ Al-Jazeera, "Chad, Niger to launch joint offensive against Boko Haram in Nigeria", March 8, 2015

³⁶ BBC, "Nigerian city of Maiduguri hit by multiple blasts", March 7, 2015

³⁷ Al-Jazeera, "Deadly suicide bombing strikes Nigeria's Maiduguri", March 11, 2015

³⁸ NBC, "What Does Boko Haram's Pledge of Allegiance to ISIS Really Mean?", March 9, 2015

³⁹ Al-Jazeera, "ISIL 'accepts Boko Haram's pledge of allegiance'", March 12, 2015

It should be noted that on April 27, 2015, following the pledge of allegiance, Boko Haram changed its name to the Islamic State's West Africa Province. For further details see: RT, "A Jihadi groups unite: Boko Haram changes name to Islamic State's West African Province", April 27, 2015

recaptured Bama town from the militants.⁴⁰

On March 27, a counter-terrorist offensive by the Nigerian military recaptured Gwoza town from Boko Haram, who authorities suspect that they have their headquarters in the town.⁴¹

On March 24, suspected armed Boko Haram militants, raided local primary schools in Damasak in Borneo State.⁴² Witnesses described how the militants kidnapped approximately 500 young students and also kidnapped some teachers, before they escaped from the town. It was reported that local authorities believe Boko Haram will use the children as human shield, although the claim was not confirmed. No group claimed responsibility for the incident, but Boko Haram have become known for staging mass kidnappings in recent years.⁴³

Somalia

On March 1, a car bomb exploded in Galkayo killing Duran Omar Gelle, the Mudug Province Custom duty police chief. He was allegedly targeted when he was returning home from work. There were no immediate claims of responsibility but authorities suspected Al-shabab Al-Mujihdeen.⁴⁴

On March 2, Somali authorities announced that Liban Haji Mohamed, 29, a Somali-US citizen was arrested in Mogadishu. Authorities alleged that he was responsible for recruiting potential militants to join Al-Shabab Al-Mujahedeen in Somalia.⁴⁵ He was wanted by US authorities for supporting Al-Shabab Al-Mujihdeen and allegedly recruiting militants in the US with the intent to send them to Somalia for terrorist training. In early 2015, he the FBI offered \$50,000 for information leading to his arrest and conviction and placed him on their Most Wanted Terrorists list. The FBI claimed that in July 2012 he left the US and they believed he travelled to Somalia to join Al-Shabab Al-Mujihdeen. The arrest confirmed this assumption but it was not reported or confirmed whether Mohammed will

⁴⁰ BBC, "Nigeria says it has ousted Boko Haram from town of Bama", March 17, 2015

⁴¹ BBC, "Boko Haram HQ Gwoza in Nigeria 'retaken'", March 27, 2015

⁴² AP, "Official: Boko Haram using civilians as human shields", March 25, 2015

⁴³ Al-Jazeera, "Boko Haram kidnaps hundreds of Nigerian civilians, official says", March 24, 2015

⁴⁴ Horseed Media, 'Somalia: Senior Police Official killed in Car bomb attack', March 1, 2015

⁴⁵ Abc.net, "FBI 'Most Wanted' terrorist Liban Haji Mohamed detained and in custody of Somali government", March 3, 2015

be extradited to the US.⁴⁶

On March 26, a car bomb detonated by Al-Shabab Al-Mujihdeen militants targeted the Maka al Mukarama hotel in Mogadishu. Several politicians, diplomats and businessmen were having meetings and visiting the hotel when the explosion occurred.⁴⁷ Following the bombing, armed militants stormed the hotel leading to a siege that involved heavy gunfire, ended on March 28, when security forces from an elite counter-terrorism unit known as the shield (Gaashaan) ended the attack killing four militants and rescuing those inside the hotel.⁴⁸ Authorities said that 14 people were killed and approximately 20 others injured. Amongst the casualties was a Swiss diplomat named Yusuf Bari - Bari.⁴⁹ Al-Shababab Al-Mujihdeen militants said they were responsible for the attack in a statement on March 28.⁵⁰

Tunisia

On March 7, security forces uncovered a large arsenal of weapons near the south-east border with Libya, close to the town of Ben Guerdane.⁵¹ According to Tunisian authorities the weapons seized included: RPGs, rockets, explosives and thousands of rounds of ammunition.⁵² Following this, during a follow up counter-terrorist offensive on March 9, security forces discovered more rockets and several Kalashnikov rifles in close proximity from the location of the first weapons cache. No group claimed responsibility for the weapons cache.⁵³

On March 18, approximately 20 people were killed and 44 others injured as a result of an armed

⁴⁶ ABC, "FBI 'Most Wanted' terrorist Liban Haji Mohamed detained and in custody of Somali government", March 3, 2015

⁴⁷ AP, "At least 9 dead as militants attack hotel in Somali capital", March 27, 2015

⁴⁸ Reuters, "Somalia hotel siege ends, 14 dead: government", March 28, 2015

⁴⁹ AFP, "At least 17 killed in terrorist raid on Somali hotel", March 28, 2015

⁵⁰ Reuters *ibid.*

⁵¹ IBT, "Tunisia: Weapon smuggling a 'worrying development' for country that is facing rise of hard line islamist groups", March 11, 2015

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Reuters, "Tunisia finds another large arms cache near Libya border", March 9, 2015

attack by three suspected IS gunmen at the Bardo National Museum in Tunis.⁵⁴ Authorities said the gunmen, who according to witnesses were reportedly dressed in military fatigues, targeted a group of mainly European tourists outside the museum. It was reported that the gunmen fired at the tourists. Many tried to run towards the museum for safety but authorities said the gunmen pursued them and took hostages. After several hours police stormed the building and attempted to rescue the hostages.⁵⁵ Tunisian authorities killed two of the gunmen, who they identified as Tunisian citizens Yassine Labidi and Saber Khachnaoui. The third attacker escaped.⁵⁶

Tunisian authorities said they believe that the gunmen were trained in Libya at camps operated by an unspecified group prior to carrying out the attack.⁵⁷ As part of the initial investigation into the incident, police said four people were arrested suspected with having direct links to the attack and five other people were indicted for having knowledge and ties with the terrorist cell.⁵⁸ In a statement posted on the Internet, the IS said they were responsible for the attack and named the perpetrators as Abu Zakariya al-Tunisi and Abu Anas al-Tunisi. However, the Tunisian government said that they had information that led them to believe that a local al-Qaeda linked militant group, known as the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigades, may have carried out the attack.⁵⁹ By March 26, police investigating the attack, said in total they had arrested 23 suspects in connection with the incident.⁶⁰ Additionally during a counter-terrorism offensive that killed eight militants, Tunisian police said amongst those

⁵⁴ Independent, “Tunisia museum shooting: Country in shock as Tunis attack leaves more than 20 people dead”, March 9, 2015

⁵⁵ BBC, “As it happened”, March 9, 2015

⁵⁶ BBC, “Third Tunis Bardo Museum attacker 'on the run'”, March 22, 2015

⁵⁷ Reuters, “Thousands of Tunisians, leaders march after Bardo attack”, March 29, 2015

⁵⁸ IBT, “Tunisia Attack: 9 People Arrested Over National Bardo Museum Raid That Killed 23”, March 19, 2015

It should also be noted that on May 20, 2015, Moroccan Abdelmajid Touil, a man was arrested in Italy, accused of ties to the attack. For more details see: BBC, “Tunisia Bardo museum attack: Man arrested in Italy”, May 20, 2015

⁵⁹ CNN, “ISIS apparently claims responsibility for Tunisia museum attack; 9 arrested”, March 19, 2015

⁶⁰ ABC news, “Tunisia arrests 23 suspects in 'terrorist cell' over Bardo Museum attack”, March 26, 2015

targeted and killed, was an Algerian militant who they identified as Lokman Abu Sakhra. He was the alleged planner of the Bardo National Museum attack.⁶¹

Uganda

On March 30, the lead prosecutor in the ongoing trial of 13 men accused of involvement in the 2010 World Cup bombings in Kampala was fatally shot by two gunmen as she was travelling home from work. The victim was identified as Joan Kagezi. No group claimed responsibility for the Kagezi's assassination but authorities blamed Al-Shabab Al-Mujahedeen militants.⁶²

Middle East

Egypt

On March 1, an IED killed two people and injured five others, including a police officer in Aswan. Police believe the bomb was a homemade device and the target of the attack was the police station. There was no claim of responsibility for the incident.⁶³

On March 2, several homemade devices exploded in different neighborhoods in Cairo. Authorities said a car hidden under a parked car near the Supreme Court killed two people and wounded nine others.⁶⁴ A second bomb detonated in a residential area shortly after, in Heliopolis neighborhood. However there were no casualties.⁶⁵ Finally, it was reported that a third bomb, exploded near a police station in Maadi suburb, again causing no casualties but it was reported that some cars in the vicinity of the bombing were damaged. No group claimed responsibility for the attacks, although police believe they were connected. The perpetrators were at large and no arrests had been made.⁶⁶

On March 10, one person was killed and approximately 30 soldiers and police officers were injured

⁶¹ AFP, "Jihadi chief killed as thousands march in Tunisia", March 29, 2015

⁶² BBC, "Uganda prosecutor in al-Shabab bomb case shot dead:", March 31, 2015

⁶³ AFP, "Bomb blast in Egypt tourist town Aswan kills two: police", March 1, 2015

⁶⁴ Reuters, "Bomb near top Cairo court house kills two; other blasts hit capital", June 2, 2015

⁶⁵ AFP, "Bomb blast near Egypt court kills two, wounds nine", March 2, 2015

⁶⁶ Daily News Egypt, "Minor explosions rock Maadi", March 13, 2015

when a suicide car bomber exploded at a police barracks in al-Arish in the Sinai Peninsula.⁶⁷ Witnesses reported that the perpetrator drove a water freighter towards the rear entrance to the police compound. As the vehicle approached, police fired on it, detonating the explosives hidden inside. The Sinai Province group claimed responsibility for the incident.⁶⁸

Iraq

According to the US Department of Defense during March 2015, there were over 200 US led coalition airstrikes conducted against IS targets in Iraq. The ICT database team, were not able to report on each of these counter-terrorist operations, but it should be noted that during the airstrikes, according to the DoD: “30 fighting positions; 117 vehicles; five checkpoints; seven staging areas; one tank; two IED factories; six artillery pieces; three anti-aircraft artillery pieces; four crossing points; one remotely piloted aircraft; eight bridges; two rocket sites; 34 bulldozers and excavators; two command and control facilities and 36 IS held buildings” were targeted and destroyed.⁶⁹

Some of the most significant strikes included:

On March 13, a suspected US led coalition airstrike targeted IS militants in Anbar. However 22 Iraqi soldiers were killed during the incident. Iraqi authorities blamed US authorities, however the US denied that the incident occurred because of friendly fire.⁷⁰ Local media reported that the Iraqi military planes were also leading counter-terrorist strikes in the region and the soldiers may have been killed by friendly fire. However, there was no official confirmation by US authorities.⁷¹

On March 16, US led coalition airstrikes targeted IS militants in Ramadi, halting the militants taking control of the area.⁷²

On March 25, US led coalition strikes targeted IS militants in Tikrit and surrounding towns resulting

⁶⁷ Wall Street Journal, “One Killed and Dozens Wounded in Sinai Suicide Bombing”, March 10, 2015

⁶⁸ BBC, “Deadly bomb attacks hit Egypt's Sinai peninsula”, March 10, 2015

⁶⁹ <http://www.defense.gov/>

⁷⁰ Reuters, “Iraq troops killed in Anbar blast, U.S. says wasn't coalition strike”, March 12, 2015

⁷¹ RT, “Iraqi govt urged to probe killing of 22 soldiers, US-led airstrikes blamed”, March 13, 2015

⁷² CNN, “Coalition warplanes help stem ISIS' advance in Ramadi, official says”, March 25, 2015

in successfully regaining control of Tikrit.⁷³

During the last week in March, US authorities said US led airstrikes targeted IS militants in Baiji, destroying IS fighting positions; in Mosul destroying “an IS tactical unit, a IS checkpoint and destroyed 31 IS vehicles and two IS anti-aircraft artillery weapons” and close to Sinjar, where an IS tactical unit and building were destroyed.⁷⁴

Also in Iraq during March 2015:

On March 10, a series of seven almost simultaneous car bombs exploded in Ramadi killing 10 people and injuring 30 others. Mustafa Samir, the police chief of the area, said the suicide bombers were driving in Humavees and launched the attack in Hawz, Malaab, Toi, Albu Faraj and Albu Eitha areas of the town.⁷⁵ IS claimed responsibility for the attacks.⁷⁶

On March 15, Iraqi intelligence claimed it arrested 31 IS militants, foiling a cell that they suspect was responsible for planning and carrying out over 50 recent attacks in Baghdad.⁷⁷ The suspects allegedly admitted to carrying out 52 terrorist acts in different areas of Baghdad in 2014 and early 2015. Authorities seized also large quantities of explosives and weapons at the time of the arrests. It should be noted that during March 2015 there was significantly less bombings noted in Baghdad, and authorities claimed this was due to the dismantling of this IS cell.⁷⁸

On March 23, suspected IS militants carried out a series of attacks targeting civilian areas in and around Baghdad, killing 16 people. On the same day, 13 people were killed and 39 others wounded in a separate attack that targeted an outdoor market in the Baghdad suburb of Nahrawan; a commercial center in the Abu Dashir neighborhood; a residential area in the southern district of Dora and a market in Mahmoudiyah, located outside Baghdad.⁷⁹

⁷³ New York Times, “Opening New Iraq Front, U.S. Strikes ISIS in Tikrit”, March 25, 2015

⁷⁴ <http://www.defense.gov/>

⁷⁵ AFP, “IS attacks Iraq's Ramadi with seven car bombs”, March 10, 2015

⁷⁶ IBT, “Iraq: Isis unleashes seven suicide bomb attacks on government troops in Ramadi”, March 11, 2015

⁷⁷ Iraq Tradelink News Agency in English, “31 IS cell Dismantled in Baghdad”, March 15, 2015

⁷⁸ AFP, “Iraq says busted ISIS Baghdad bombing network”, March 15, 2015

⁷⁹ AP, “Iraq officials: Baghdad bombings kill 19; wound 36”, March 23, 2015

Israel and the West Bank

On March 2, following the lifting of a gag order imposed by military censorship at the Beersheba District Court Israeli authorities announced they had arrested four Israeli businessmen accused of selling materials to Hamas militants in Gaza. The alleged actions of the businessmen are believed to have assisted Hamas to rebuild its terrorist infrastructure in the Gaza strip, following Operation Protective Edge. The arrests were the culmination of a joint security effort by Israeli authorities that included the police, the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet), the IDF, the Ministry of Defense and the Tax Authority. Israeli authorities said the arrests were made during February 2015 but the exact date was not made public. They also said six Palestinian businessmen were also indicted in connection with the incident and over 20 people were detained and question about the case.⁸⁰

Michael Peretz, 46, a resident of Mivtachim near the Gaza border was indicted for storing the goods in his warehouse in Mivtachim and the Shin Bet alleged he was responsible for organizing the transfer to Gaza on trucks through the Kerem Shalom border crossing. The other suspects were identified as Israeli businessmen: Yehoram Alon, Nagi Zuareb and Tzion Ben-Hamu.⁸¹ The main contact in Gaza was a merchant named Osama Zuaroub.⁸² The Shin Bet said the materials were transferred directly to Hamas training camps.⁸³ According to Israeli police, during questioning, the majority of the suspects confessed to transferring and storing the goods, claiming they were motivated by financial incentives. According to the Shin Bet, Hamas paid the businessmen over \$30 million for the materials.

⁸⁴

On March 6, Mohammad Salima, 21, from east Jerusalem, drove his car on purpose into a crowd of Israeli border police and then stabbed seven people using what witnesses described a butcher's knife.

⁸⁰ Times of Israel, "Israelis suspected of delivering dangerous supplies to Hamas", March 2, 2015

⁸¹ Jerusalem Post, "Israel charges 4 businessmen for allegedly smuggling weapons-making material to Hamas", March 2, 2015

⁸² New York Times, "3 Israelis Are Charged on Suspicion of Supplying Materials to Hamas Militants", March 2, 2015

⁸³ Haaretz, "3 Israelis charged with smuggling materials meant to rebuild Gaza tunnels", March 2, 2015

⁸⁴ Ibid.

He was shot and injured by a Border Policeman and a Light Rail security guard at the scene. Authorities said no group claimed responsibility for the incident.⁸⁵

On March 22, the Shin Bet said it has arrested six members of a Hamas cell with explosive materials they were planning to use for an attack against Israeli targets. Israeli authorities said they seized large amounts of Sulphur and 25 grams of mercury fulminate, which they said were used to make explosives. The Shin Bet said the six suspects had confessed during interrogation to having been recruited by Hamas militants in Jordan and attended explosives training in Gaza. They then went back to the West Bank to carry out recruit others.⁸⁶

Lebanon

On March 11, Fatmeh Al-Khalida, was arrested at Rafik Hariri International Airport, Beirut, as she was about to board a plane to Saudi Arabia. Al-Khalida was accused of planning a suicide bombing. The Lebanese military allegedly received an intelligence tip about the woman which led to her arrest. The Lebanese military said Khalida was part of a group of suicide bombers who were planning to target the Iranian embassy under orders from Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, a Saudi national who was a known Al-Qaeda member from Iraq.⁸⁷

On March 22, cousins Omar and Bilal Mikati, were arrested by the Lebanese military. Authorities said the suspects had been involved in attacks against the Lebanese Army and other terrorist operations. Omar Mikati, known by his nom du guerre Abu Hureira, is believed to have been responsible for the beheading of Lebanese soldiers Ali al-Sayyed and Abbas Medlej during their captivity by IS militants on the outskirts of Aarsal in August 2014.⁸⁸

Syria

In March 2015, according to US authorities, over 90 airstrikes were conducted against IS targets by

⁸⁵ Times of Israel, “Five wounded in car-ramming terror attack in Jerusalem”, March 6, 2015

⁸⁶ Times of Israel , “Israel says arrests W.Bank Hamas cell planning attacks”, March 22, 2015

⁸⁷ Daily Star, “Suspected female suicide bomber detained at Beirut airport: reports”, March 11, 2015

⁸⁸ Daily Star, “Lebanon Army arrests ISIS suspect accused of beheading soldiers”, March 25, 2015

US-led Coalition forces. The US MoD reported during the airstrikes: “121 fighting positions; two staging areas; one checkpoint; two oil refineries and collection points; 26 vehicles and one tank were targeted and destroyed.”⁸⁹

On March 6, it was reported that Abu Homam al-Shami⁹⁰, the alleged military chief of Jabat al-Nusra, was killed in a Syrian military air strike in Idlib province, although the exact location of the incident was not confirmed.⁹¹ It was reported that the airstrike targeted al-Shami as he was holding a meeting with other senior Jabat al-Nusra militants.⁹² Authorities said three other militants were also killed. They were reportedly identified as Abu Musab Falastini, Abu Omar Kurdi, and Abu Baraa Ansari.⁹³ According to media reports, there were two airstrikes, carried out by the Syrian military. The first targeted the meeting that was taking place and the second targeted a residential area that was being used by Jabat al-Nusra militants as an operational base.⁹⁴

On March 11, a 13 minute video was published showing the killing in (an unknown location in Syria) of an Israeli Arab named Muhammad Musallam, 19, by IS militants. According to Israeli authorities Musallam went to Syria to fight for IS in October 2013. However, his family, said he was deceived by IS militants when he was on holiday in Turkey and was forced to join the IS.⁹⁵ In the video, he is seen in an orange jumpsuit like similar IS hostages who were beheaded, saying that he been drafted and trained by Israeli intelligence service Mossad. The video then showed Musallam escorted to a field and then purportedly shot in the head, by an IS child attacker, who shouted "Allahu Akbar!" (God is great).⁹⁶

On March 20, two car bombs exploded killing 45 people celebrating Nowruz, the Iranian New Year,

⁸⁹ <http://www.defense.gov/>

⁹⁰ For more information about Al-Shami see the following profiles. CNN, “Source: Syrian warplanes kill leaders of al Qaeda affiliate”, March 6, 2015

⁹¹ Al-Jazeera, “Senior Nusra Front commander killed in Syria air strike”, March 6, 2015

⁹² Independent, “Senior Jabhat al-Nusra commander Abu Hammam al-Shami 'killed in Syria air strike’”, March 6,2015

⁹³ BBC, “Syria's al-Nusra Front commander 'killed in strike’”, March 6, 2015

⁹⁴ Cnn Ibid.

⁹⁵ IBT, “Isis: Father of Israeli Arab Muhammad Musallam murdered by child jihadist vows vengeance’”, March 12, 2015

⁹⁶ JPost, “ISIS forced our son to say he was a Mossad spy, family of slain Israeli Arab says”, March 11, 2015

in Hassaka in northeastern Syria.⁹⁷ There was no claim of responsibility for the attack but authorities blamed the IS.⁹⁸

Turkey

On March 12, a man, who was not identified, was arrested for allegedly helping three British schoolgirls enter Syria allegedly to join IS militants. Turkish authorities claimed that the man they arrested was a spy working for a ‘foreign intelligence agency’ but did not reveal his nationality or identity.⁹⁹ Authorities reported that Shamima Begum, Amira Abase, both 15, and Kadiza Sultana, 16, went missing in February 2015¹⁰⁰ and authorities believe they travelled to Syria via Turkey to join the IS. The exact location of the girls are unknown.¹⁰¹

On March 16, three British male teenagers were arrested at Istanbul airport, as they attempted to travel to Syria to allegedly join the IS. They were deported back to the UK, where they were arrested.¹⁰² (SEE UK section above)

Yemen

On March 20, 142 people were killed and 351 others were injured, in a coordinated suicide bombing by suspected IS militants targeting Shia Mosques in Saana. In the first attack, a bomb detonated at the Badr mosque. A second suicide bomber then targeted the worshippers who were trying to escape. Shortly after, two suicide bombers attacked the Al-Hashush mosque located in the northern part of Saana. Authorities said one of the attackers, pretended to have a broken leg and authorities said he hid the explosives in the leg cast.¹⁰³ The attacks targeted Huthis rebels who were attending prayers. In an online statement, a previously an unknown branch of the IS, saying they were based

⁹⁷ Reuters, “Car bombs kill 20 at Syrian Kurdish new year celebration”, March 20, 2015

⁹⁸ AFP, “45 dead in attacks on Syria Kurds celebrating new year”, March 21, 2015

⁹⁹ CNN, “Turkey: We’ve arrested agent suspected of helping missing UK girls”, March 12, 2015

¹⁰⁰ See ICT database February 2014 report

¹⁰¹ BBC, Syria girls: Man arrested ‘for helping British trio’, March 12, 2015

¹⁰² Times Online, “British trio stopped on way to join Islamic State”, March 16, 2015

¹⁰³ New York Times, “Suicide Attacks at Mosques in Yemen Kill More Than 130”, March 20, 2015

in Saana, claimed responsibility for the attack, although it was not confirmed by Yemen authorities.¹⁰⁴ On March 25, Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners launched air strikes¹⁰⁵ targeting Shi'a Houthis rebels in Saana.¹⁰⁶ Witnesses said they heard explosions at the al-Dulaimi air base near the international airport where warplanes attacked the rebels' bases. The militants used anti-aircraft guns and missiles to return fire.¹⁰⁷ It was reported that Saudi authorities said the coalition air strikes was made up of aircrafts from the following countries: Saudi Arabia; UAE; Kuwait; Bahrain; Qatar and Jordan. It was not confirmed but media reports and the Yemen health ministry claimed 18 militants were killed and 24 were wounded.¹⁰⁸

North America

USA

On March 5, Abid Naseer, 28, was convicted in New York for his role in a terrorist plot to bomb the Arndale shopping Centre in Manchester, as well as carrying out other attacks on behalf of Al-Qaeda in Europe (specifically Denmark and UK) and the US.¹⁰⁹ Three other men were previously convicted in connection with conspiracy to the plot.¹¹⁰ Naseer was first arrested, along with 11 other militants, in 2009 in the UK indicted for plotting to bomb the Arndale shopping Centre in Manchester.¹¹¹ The charges were dropped after a British court found there was insufficient evidence, however, US prosecutors later named him in an indictment that alleged he was also involved in a failed plot to attack the New York City subway. Naseer pleaded not guilty to the charges against him. The case was

¹⁰⁴ CNN, "Yemen: Bombs kill 137 at mosques; ISIS purportedly lays claim", March 21, 2015

¹⁰⁵ New York Times, "Saudi Arabia Leads Air Assault in Yemen", March 20, 2015

¹⁰⁶ Wall Street Journal, "Saudis Show Their Military Might in Yemen Conflict", March 20, 2015

¹⁰⁷ BBC *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ CNN, "Saudi-led coalition strikes rebels in Yemen, inflaming tensions in region", March 27, 2015

¹⁰⁹ Guardian, "Abid Naseer found guilty of al-Qaida bomb plot by New York court", March 4, 2015

¹¹⁰ The local, "Jyllands-Posten plotter found guilty in New York", March 5, 2015

¹¹¹ Telegraph, "Abid Naseer found guilty of participating in al-Qaeda plot to blow up Manchester's Arndale Centre", March 4, 2015

significant as several MI5 agents testified in court about their surveillance operations on Naseer and other suspects. The US government alleged Naseer had received bomb-making training by Al-Qaeda lieutenants in Pakistan in 2008.¹¹²

On March 18, Tairod Nathan Webster Pugh, 47, was indicted by a grand jury on charges of attempting to support IS militants.¹¹³ He denied the charges against him.¹¹⁴ The US department of Justice said that Pugh, who is a US Air Force veteran, had become radicalized and he converted to Islam. His wife alerted authorities about his support to the IS. US authorities alleged that Pugh travelled to Turkey in mid-January 2015, in an effort to cross into Syria to join the IS but he was denied entry at the airport. When he allegedly refused to show authorities his laptop, he was transported on a flight to Egypt, several hours later. Egyptian authorities discovered during interrogation, following his arrest that his laptop had been purposefully damaged and his mobile phone contained images of weapons. If convicted, he faced a maximum sentence of 35 years in prison.¹¹⁵

On March 12, Raees Alam Qazi, 22, and his brother, Sheheryar Alam Qazi, 32, pleaded guilty to planning terror attacks targeting New York City and assaulting two deputy US marshals while in custody.¹¹⁶ During a court hearing, that took place in Miami, Raees admitted the charges and said he was financially supported by Sheheryar. Raees Qazi also pleaded guilty for supporting Al-Qaeda. The brothers were arrested on November 29, 2012.¹¹⁷ Authorities said the brothers had been under FBI surveillance for several weeks prior to their arrest. At the time of arrest, explosives were allegedly found in the suspects' possession. If found guilty, they faced a maximum sentence of 35 years and 20

¹¹² Independent, "Abid Naseer found guilty of al-Qaeda plot to blow up NYC subway and Manchester's Arndale Centre", March 4, 2015

¹¹³ BBC, "US veteran tried to join Islamic State, prosecutors say", March 18, 2015

¹¹⁴ CNN, "Air Force veteran pleads not guilty to terror-related charges", March 17, 2015

¹¹⁵ New York Times, "Air Force Veteran From New Jersey Tried to Aid ISIS, U.S. Charges", March 17, 2015

¹¹⁶ US Dept. of Justice, "Two Florida Brothers Plead Guilty to Terrorism Violations and Assault in Two Deputy U.S. Marshals", March 12, 2015

¹¹⁷ New York City Terror Plot News: 2 Brothers from Pakistan Plead Guilty to Terror Plan

years.¹¹⁸

Canada

On March 11, Canadian authorities said an FBI sting operation, resulted in the arrest of an IS supporter identified as Jahanzeb Malik, 33. He is accused of plotting to bomb the US consulate and other buildings in Toronto's financial district. Authorities became aware of the plot when Malik attempted to recruit an undercover Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer.¹¹⁹ The agent said Malik rejoiced in showing him videos of beheadings and asked the agent advice on how to build bombs.¹²⁰ The undercover officer was suspicious of Malik's previous activities that including frequent journeys to Pakistan and the FBI alleged that Malik had attended combat terrorist training in Libya. Malik was arrested by Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).¹²¹ He faced extradition from Canada to Pakistan.¹²²

On March 21, Raed Jaser and Chiheb Esseghaier were both convicted in a court in Ontario of terror related charges. The men, who were arrested in a FBI sting counter-terrorist operation in 2013, had plotted to derail a passenger train from New York to Toronto, as part of an Al-Qaeda linked attack.¹²³ According to the police at the time of the arrest the plot was still in the planning stages. The men, who both pleaded not guilty, faced sentencing in April 2015 are likely to be sentenced to life in prison.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ US. Dept. Justice *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Reuters, "Canada says foils plot to bomb Toronto financial district, U.S. consulate", March 11, 2015

¹²⁰ CBC, "Jahanzeb Malik ordered out of Canada", June 5, 2015

¹²¹ Reuters, "Pakistani man accused of planning Toronto attack kept in custody", March 16, 2015

¹²² CBC *ibid.*

¹²³ AP, "2 in Toronto-NYC terror plot face life in prison after guilty verdict", March 16, 2015

¹²⁴ AP, "2 in Toronto-NYC terror plot face life in prison after guilty verdict", March 16, 2015

Asia

Afghanistan

On March 2, a roadside bombing in Nangarhar province killed six people, including two children were killed and injured two others. Authorities said the civilians were travelling in a private vehicle when it hit an IED causing the explosion. A separate incident close by killed an additional two civilians and wounded one other. The motives for the attacks were unknown and although authorities suspected Taliban linked militants to be responsible, no group claimed the attacks.¹²⁵

On March 6, a rare terrorist attack that targeted civilians in the Sufi mosque in Kabul, killed five people and injured six others.¹²⁶ Authorities said that they arrested five people in connection with the attack and believe the perpetrators hailed from south and east of Afghanistan, as witnesses said they spoke in Pashto dialect during the incident. There were however, no claims of responsibility for the attack and the motives were not known.¹²⁷

On March 12, security forces announced that as a result of counter-terrorism raids (although the exact date and location of the raids were not made public) Mullah Wazir and Hikmatullah (alias Sangari) were arrested. According to Afghan authorities, Wazir, is a Taliban commander responsible for the Ashmakash District of Takhar province. They said that Sangari had carried out terrorist activities on behalf of the Taliban in Logar, Maidan Wardak and Kabul provinces.¹²⁸

On March 18, a powerful car bomb exploded in Helmand province, killing seven people and injuring 46 others. The bomb also caused significant damage to the surrounding buildings and infrastructure. Authorities believe government workers who were meeting with the governor of Helmand province to discuss the presence of IS militants in Afghanistan and find counter-terrorist solutions to prevent the surge of kidnappings in the province, were the main target of the attack. The bomb exploded as the meeting was taking place.¹²⁹ The Taliban claimed responsibility for the incident.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ AP, "Roadside Bombs Kill 8 Civilians, Including 2 Children in eastern Afghanistan", March 2, 2015

¹²⁶ AAP, "Gunmen kill five in Kabul mosque attack", March 8, 2015

¹²⁷ BBC, "Afghanistan: Probe into rare Kabul mosque shooting", March 10, 2015

¹²⁸ Khaama Press, "Key Taliban commanders arrested in Kabul", March 12, 2015

¹²⁹ LA times, "Car bombing in southern Afghanistan kills at least seven people", March 18, 2015

¹³⁰ CNN, "Afghanistan: 7 killed at governor's compound; Taliban claims the attack", March 18, 2015

On March 24, gunmen opened fire on a bus and two other vehicles on one of Afghanistan's most important roads killing 13 people.¹³¹ The road connects Kabul with the southern city of Kandahar. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.¹³² However, Taliban spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, claimed the Taliban had not been involved in this attack.¹³³

On March 25, six civilians, including a child, were killed and approximately 30 others were injured when a suicide bomber detonated in Kabul. The attack occurred near the presidential palace, the finance ministry and a police station all located in central Kabul. The exact target, however, was not known by police.¹³⁴ No group claimed responsibility for the attack but authorities blamed the Taliban.¹³⁵

China

On March 6, a group of suspected Uighur militants armed with knives, targeted civilians at a railway station in Guangzhou, injuring 10 people. The attack occurred during the early morning, as the station was filled with people travelling to work and was a soft target. Police fatally shot one suspect and arrested another. It was assumed that the other attackers escaped, although police did not clarify the number of perpetrators. No group claimed responsibility for the incident.¹³⁶

On March 10, it was reported that a cell of Uighur militants were arrested after allegedly joining the IS, receiving terrorist training in the Middle east and then plotting attacks to target civilians in China. Few details were made public in the case.¹³⁷

¹³¹ Al-Jazeera, "Bus passengers killed in Afghanistan attack", March 24, 2015

¹³² BBC, "Gunmen kill 13 in Afghan road attack", March 25, 2015

¹³³ WSJ, "Gunmen Launch Deadly Attack on Afghan Highway", March 25, 2015

¹³⁴ Washington Post, "Suicide bombing kills 7 in Kabul", March 25, 2015

¹³⁵ Reuters, "Six killed in suicide bomb near Afghan presidential palace", March 25, 2015

¹³⁶ CNN, "China: 10 injured in rush-hour railway knife attack", March 6, 2015

¹³⁷ Al-Jazeera, "ISIL fighters arrested in China's Xinjiang, politician says", March 10, 2015

Indonesia

On March 21, five people, whose identities were not made public, were arrested in various locations throughout Jakarta. The suspects were charged with recruiting a squad of 16 people to join the IS in Syria and Iraq. Authorities said they raided the home of one of the suspects and seized travel documents, mobile phones, and Indonesian and US currencies. The cell were planning to enter Syria via Turkey, a known route for militants to join the fighting.¹³⁸ Additionally, on March 25, three IS militants were also arrested in Malang in East Java in connection with this IS recruitment cell.¹³⁹ It was reported that as of March 2015, the Indonesian government said they were aware of approximately 500 Indonesian citizens joining IS in Syria and Iraq.¹⁴⁰

Pakistan

On March 1, acting on an intelligence tip-off that jihadist militants were plotting to attack the Pakistan Day parade that was to take place on March 23 in Islamabad, police arrested two suspicious men from the Khana East area of the city. Police searched their home and discovered a large cache of weapons and ammunition, hidden amongst stationary supplies. During interrogation with security forces, the men confessed to planning the attack.¹⁴¹

On March 15, 15 people were killed and approximately 70 others wounded in a coordinated double bombing attack that targeted Catholic and Protestant churches in Youhanabad, a large Christian neighborhood in Lahore.¹⁴² Following the attacks, violent clashes occurred in the town, when two people suspected of being accomplices in the bombings were attacked by civilians. One of the suspected accomplices was arrested and the other escaped. Other violent clashes were reported in

¹³⁸ VOA, "Indonesia Arrests Five Islamic State Suspects", March 22, 2015

¹³⁹ ABC news, "Islamic State: Indonesia arrests seven suspected militants in one week", March 26, 2015

¹⁴⁰ IBT, "Indonesia Arrests 5 Men For Allegedly Sending People To Iraq, Syria To Join ISIS", March 23, 2015

¹⁴¹ Dawn, "Islamabad police foil terror attack planned for Pakistan Day", March 1, 2015

¹⁴² BBC, "Deadly blasts hit Pakistan churches in Lahore", March 15, 2015

Karachi. The Jamaat-ul-Ahrar group claimed responsibility for the attacks.¹⁴³

On March 17, Samiullah Afridi, a Pakistani lawyer was fatally shot as he was travelling home from work by Jundallah militants in Peshawar. Authorities said Afridi had previously received death threats (which led him to resign from his role) for representing a Dr. Shakil Afridi, who was sentenced to prison in 2012 for 33 years, for allegedly assisting US intelligence locate the location of former Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, by running a false vaccination clinic. (He was killed in a US Special Forces operation in Abbottabad on May 1, 2011).¹⁴⁴

Philippines

On March 16, six people were arrested in southern General Santos city, including Mohammad Ali Tambako, the leader of the Justice for Islamic Movement and former senior leader of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF). Tambako was wanted by Philippine authorities and was the main target of the operation; the other militants were his security guards. Authorities said the suspects were armed with guns and grenades, however they did not resist arrest. Police confiscated the weapons. The suspects were charged with carrying out a series of terrorist attacks that targeted police using the modus operandi of bombings and more recently a decapitation,¹⁴⁵ seemingly inspired by the IS.¹⁴⁶ Tambako was also charged with providing safe hideouts for jihadists Zulkifli bin Hir, (alias Marwan), and Abdul Basit Usman, (a known militant bomb maker).¹⁴⁷ The Philippine military made an official statement confirming the arrests and said the operation was joint counter-terrorist offensive using intelligence from the Philippine military, Task force, ISG, and the Philippine National

¹⁴³ New York Times, "Suicide Attacks on Pakistan Churches Kill 15", March 15, 2015

¹⁴⁴ Reuters, "Samiullah Afridi, Lawyer For Doctor Who Helped CIA Find Bin Laden, Shot Dead In Pakistan", March 17, 2015

¹⁴⁵ See September 2014 ICT database report and <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/578948/muslim-rebels-expel-leader-for-beheading>

¹⁴⁶ GMA news, "Ex-BIFF vice chair Tambako, 5 others arrested in GenSan; Usman still elusive", March 16, 2015

¹⁴⁷ South China Morning post, "Philippines security forces capture Islamic militant leader Mohammad Ali Tambako", March 16, 2015

police.¹⁴⁸

Thailand

On March 14, authorities said a bomb that was remotely detonated in Saiburee district injured four police officers and two civilians. The attack targeted border patrol officers who were accompanying a group of Buddhist monks on their way to carry out religious duties. No group claimed responsibility. On March 30, an IED targeted a police vehicle in Cho Airong district of Narathiwat province. However, the policemen were unhurt in the incident. The explosion left a large crater in the road. No group claimed responsibility.¹⁴⁹

Oceania

There were no significant terrorist or counter-terrorist incidents recorded in the Oceania region during March 2015.

¹⁴⁸ InterAksyon.com, “AFP intel operatives capture BIFF chief's right-hand man and suspected Usman coddler”, March 16,2015

¹⁴⁹ Bangkok post, “Six wounded in southern Thailand bomb blast”, March 14, 2015

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