



ICT Incidents Database Periodical Report

December 2012

The following is a summary and analysis of the terrorist attacks and counter-terrorism operations that occurred during the month of December 2012, researched and recorded by the ICT database team. Important events this month included the following:

- On 2 December, ten people went on trial in Paris, France for alleged links to the financing of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).
- On 6 December, Khaled bin Abdel Rahman Al-Hussainan, a senior Al-Qaeda militant, was killed in a suspected US drone attack near Mir Ali, North Waziristan, Pakistan.
- On 7 December, a Taliban suicide attacker armed with an underwear bomb failed in his attempt to assassinate Afghan Intelligence Chief Asadullah Khalid in Kabul, Afghanistan.
- On 10 December, The US State Department said the al-Nusra Front for the People of the Levant is an alias for Al-Qaeda in Iraq and designated it as a "foreign terrorist organisation".
- On 11 December, Shaker Masri was sentenced in a US court to nearly 10 years in prison for maintaining ties with Al-Shabab Al-Mujahedeen.
- On 12 December, Ashraf Abu Aram and Muhammad Zeitoun confessed in Israel to plotting a kidnapping with the purpose of negotiating the release of PFLP leader Ahmad Saadat.
- On 12 December, four men were sentenced to up to 14 years in prison for plotting to carry out a bomb attack at the Eurovision song contest in Baku, Azerbaijan.
- On 14 December, police in the Philippines fatally shot suspected JI militant Mohd Noor Fikrie bin Abd Kahar, after he allegedly planted an improvised explosive device (IED) in Davao.
- On 15 December, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants attacked a military base at Bacha Khan International Airport in Peshawar, Pakistan, killing nine people and injuring 45 others.
- On 17 December, Al-Shabab Al-Mujahedeen released a statement declaring that American citizen Omar Shafik Hammami was no longer a member of the organization.
- On 24 December, Jama'tu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan (Ansaru) released a statement claiming responsibility for the kidnapping of French Engineer Francis Colump in Nigeria.



EUROPE

France

On 2 December, 10 people went on trial in Paris for allegedly financing the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a terrorist organisation which the United Nations considers an Al-Qaeda affiliate.¹ The suspects, most of whom are of Turkish origin, allegedly collected funds at mosques throughout France and then sent them to the IMU between 2003 and 2008. They were apprehended during police raids in France, Germany and the Netherlands. The trial was the first-ever concerning the IMU in a Paris court.²

On 4 December, two people were arrested in southern France on suspicion of having had ties to Mohamed Merah, the perpetrator of the Toulouse shooting attacks in March 2012. A man identified as Charles Mencarelli was arrested at his home in the town of Albi, about 45 miles northeast of Toulouse. Mencarelli's former partner was arrested separately at her home in Toulouse.³ According to the Sipa news agency, Charles Mencarelli was accused of helping obtain the scooter used in the attacks.⁴

United Kingdom

On 7 December, four men were arrested after two bombs were discovered and defused by police in Londonderry, Northern Ireland. According to police, the bombs were planted by dissident republicans to protest the visit of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Northern Ireland and interfere with the peace process. No group claimed responsibility for planting the bombs.⁵

AFRICA

Algeria

On 17 December, it was reported that Salah Gasmî, aka Mohamed Abou Salah, who is thought to be the second-in-command of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), was

¹ Fox News, "10 on trial in Paris in jihadist financing ring with suspected al-Qaida tie", 3 December 2012.

² AP, "10 on trial in Paris in jihadist financing ring with suspected al-Qaida tie", 3 December 2012.

³ AFP, "Two 'accomplices' held for Toulouse attack", 4 December 2012.

⁴ Guardian, "Toulouse shootings: man and woman arrested over suspected links to killer", 4 December 2012.

⁵ The Herald Scotland, "Four arrests as bomb found ahead of Clinton's Northern Ireland visit", 7 December 2012.



arrested in Cheurfa, about 90 miles southeast of Algiers.⁶ Gasmi was a communications specialist whom authorities claim was the mastermind behind a series of suicide attacks in Algeria in 2007,⁷ and who was also responsible for publishing AQIM statements on jihadist Web sites. In 2006, Salah announced an alliance between AQIM and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (SGPC). His arrest came several weeks after AQIM's top military commander Rabah Makhfi, aka Sheikh Nacer, was killed by the Algerian military in the eastern Bejaia region.⁸

Mauritania

On 29 December, British student Ahmed Shaheen, 26, was arrested on the border between Mauritania and Mali.⁹ Shaheen reportedly told the Mauritanian authorities that he was trying to reach Timbuktu, Mali, on foot, where he intended to join the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The British Foreign Office reported seeking more information about the case.¹⁰

Nigeria

On 2 December, 10 Christian civilians and five police were killed in a machete and gun attack in Chibok, Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria. Witnesses said the attackers entered the town at approximately 21:00 chanting "Allah Akbar" as they attacked selected homes in the predominantly Christian part of town, slitting the throats of the 10 victims.¹¹ Gunmen then attacked government targets and churches near the border with Cameroon, killing five policemen. Although no group claimed responsibility for the attack, authorities suspected Boko Haram.¹²

On 19 December, approximately 30 gunmen stormed a residential complex in northern Katsina State. Witnesses said the gunmen arrived in three cars, and then divided into groups to carry out the attack, during which they kidnapped French citizen Francis Colump, 63, and killed both Rabe Dan'Ungiwa, a guard at his residence, and Abubakar Sale, a passer-by.

⁶ AFP, "Top Al-Qaeda operative held southeast of Algiers", 17 December 2012.

⁷ Reuters, "Senior al Qaeda man reported arrested in Algeria", 17 December 2012.

⁸ AFP, "Top Qaeda operative held southeast of Algiers: Security", 19 December 2012.

⁹ Telegraph, "British man reportedly stopped in Africa while attempting to join terrorist group", 29 December 2012.

¹⁰ Lebanon Times, "Ahmed Shaheen: British student arrested in North Africa for "trying to join terror group", 29 December 2012.

¹¹ Al-Jazeera, "Boko Haram suspected in deadly Nigeria attack", 3 December 2012.

¹² BBC, "Borno attacks: Nigeria 'militants' kill Christians", 2 December 2012.



Colump had been handling a federal windmill project on behalf of French company Vergnet.¹³ On 24 December, Jama'tu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan (Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa), also known as Ansaru, issued a press release claiming responsibility for the kidnapping,¹⁴ and claiming it was retaliation against the French ban on the niqab (face veil) and French military intervention in Mali. Ansaru is believed to have ties to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Ansaru first surfaced in January 2012, when it released a written statement of its existence in Kano; it subsequently posted its first online video in June 2012. In November, 2012, the British government outlawed Ansaru as a terrorist group, and asserted its belief that the group had been behind the kidnapping of a British and an Italian citizen in May 2011, who were later killed, in March 2012, during a failed rescue attempt.¹⁵ Ansaru pledged to continue its attacks on French citizens until France changed its policy regarding the niqab and ceased its military action in Mali.¹⁶

Somalia

On 17 December, Al-Shabab Al-Mujahedeen released a statement on Twitter claiming that American fighter Omar Shafik Hammami, aka Abu Mansur Al-Amriki, was no longer a member of the group. Hammami has been on the FBI's most wanted terrorist list since 14 November 2012.¹⁷ Al-Shabab condemned messages posted by Hammami, calling them the "frivolous ramblings and whimsical desires of those who wish to enhance their image at the price of jihad and the mujahedeen",¹⁸ and denied that he had ever held a position of leadership within its ranks.¹⁹ Several months previously, Hammami publicly expressed his fear that other members of the group would kill him over differences of opinion.

Tunisia

On 21 December, Tunisian authorities announced the arrest of 16 militants with ties to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), in the western regions of Kasserine and Jendouba, near the Algerian border. Interior Minister Ali Larayedh said the suspects had been attending a training camp run by three Algerians close to AQIM leader Abou Moussab Abdelouadoud

¹³ Afriquejet.com, "Nigeria: Gunmen kidnap Frenchman in Nigeria", 19 December 2012.

¹⁴ BBC, "Nigeria: Islamist group Ansaru 'kidnapped' French man", 24 December 2012.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ VOA, "Nigerian Islamist Sect Claims Kidnap of French Engineer", 24 December 2012.

¹⁷ Reuters, "American added to the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists list", 14 November 2012.

¹⁸ AP, "Somalia militant group publicly rebukes American member for obstinacy, 'pursuit of fame', 17 December 2012.

¹⁹ Long War Journal, "Shabaab rebukes American commander Omar Hammami", 18 December 2012.



(aka Abdelmalek Droukdel).²⁰ During the operation, security forces also seized weapons, ammunition, explosives, binoculars, maps and military uniforms. Authorities believe the majority of the weapons came from Libya. Subsequently, eight other militants, three of them Libyans, were arrested in Jendouba.²¹

MIDDLE EAST

Iraq

On 2 December, Iraqi authorities reported the arrest of a senior Al-Qaeda in Iraq militant, and the seizure of a list of the names and locations of other operatives.²² The identity of the militant arrested was unclear. According to reports on the State-run Al-Iraqiya TV, it was Al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi who had been arrested. However, according to other media outlets, it was another, unnamed prominent leader of the group, someone responsible for numerous attacks throughout Iraq, who had been arrested.²³

On 31 December, a series of bombings and shootings throughout Iraq killed 23 people and wounded 83 others, the majority of them Shi'ite pilgrims. The worst attack occurred in Mussayib, where three houses were bombed, killing seven people, two of them children, and injuring four others. In a series of attacks in Diyala Province, north of Baghdad, 19 people were injured, including 10 Shi'ite pilgrims who were walking to Karbala. In three mortar strikes south of Baghdad, one Shi'ite pilgrim was killed and nine were wounded as they were making the traditional trek to the holy city of Karbala for Arba'een, commemorating the martyrdom of Hussein bin Ali. In addition, 13 people were killed in Baghdad, and a suicide car bomb killed four people and wounded 20 others in Karrada. A series of bombings in Kirkuk and nearby towns killed five policemen and wounded 11 civilians. Lastly, three policemen were shot dead in separate incidents in Mosul, and one policeman was killed and another wounded by a roadside bomb in Tuz Khurmatu.²⁴ No group claimed responsibility for the attacks.²⁵

²⁰ Magharebia, "Tunisia Arrests 16 Al-Qaeda Suspects", 21 December 2012.

²¹ AFP, "16 Qaeda suspects arrested in Tunisia: minister", 21 December 2012.

²² Al-Jazeera, "Iraq's 'al-Qaeda chief' arrested", 2 December 2012.

²³ CNN, "High-ranking al Qaeda in Iraq figure arrested, officials say", 3 December 2012.

²⁴ AFP, "Wave of Iraq attacks kills 23", 31 December 2012.

²⁵ VOA, "Iraq Car Bomb Kills at Least 20 Shi'ite Pilgrim", 31 December 2012.



Israel and the West Bank

On 12 December, Israeli authorities reported that a joint Shin Bet, police and IDF investigation had uncovered burgeoning terrorism infrastructure, which was being established by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in Ramallah and adjacent villages in the West Bank. Two members of the terrorist cell, Ashraf Abu Aram and Muhammad Zeitoun, both residents of Ramallah, confessed to plotting a kidnapping to negotiate the release of PFLP leader Ahmad Saadat, who is serving a 30-year sentence in Israel for his role in the murder of Minister Rehavam Zeevi.²⁶ The operatives were allegedly considering two courses of action. Either they would open fire on an IDF unit to create a diversion that would enable them to abduct a soldier, or they would kidnap an Israeli hitchhiker at the Jit Intersection in the West Bank. In either case, they planned to use a commercial van to transport the captive to a safe house in Kafr Aqab, on the outskirts of Ramallah.²⁷ According to the Shin Bet, Abu Aram sought to purchase two guns and an automatic rifle, and had even contacted an arms dealer.²⁸ Abu Aram, 26, was charged with establishing the militant cell, while Zeitoun, 26, was accused of recruiting operatives. Both were also charged with conspiracy and aiding an illegal group, and have been detained until the completion of their trial. The investigation also led to the arrest of eight additional men who admitted to acting on behalf of PFLP, including rioting and attacking IDF troops.²⁹

Syria

On 10 December, the US State Department claimed that the Al-Nusra Front is an alias for Al-Qaeda in Iraq, and designated it a "foreign terrorist organisation".³⁰ The Obama administration further claimed that Al-Qaeda in Iraq was supplying money, weapons and manpower to the Al-Nusra Front. However, sanctions imposed as a result of this declaration – which was meant to isolate the group from what the Obama administration views as the more tolerant elements of the Syrian resistance – will have almost no impact, other than to impede travel for senior members of the Al-Nusra Front. Sanctions were also imposed

²⁶ Ynet, "Shin bet nabs West Bank terror cell", 25 December 2012.

²⁷ Jerusalem Post, "Shin bet nabs West Bank terror cell", 25 December 2012.

²⁸ Haaretz, "Shin Bet arrests Palestinian cell planning abduction of Israeli soldier", 25 December 2012.

²⁹ Jerusalem Post, "Shin bet nabs West Bank terror cell", 25 December 2012.

³⁰ CNN, "U.S. blacklists al-Nusra Front fighters in Syria", 10 December 2012.



against senior figures and groups inside the Assad government and accused of complicity with oppression.³¹

On 13 December, two car bombs exploded in different suburbs of Damascus, killing 24 people and wounding 30 others.³² The first bomb exploded in the morning, near a school in Qatana, and injured many children. Several hours later, a bomb exploded in the Jdaidet Artuz district.³³ No group claimed responsibility for the attacks, which came on the heels of an explosion at the Interior Ministry in Damascus the previous evening, which killed five people.³⁴

Turkey

On 3 December, approximately 1,000 Turkish security forces conducted large-scale operations in the Amanos Mountains against rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). As a result of the two-day operation, 13 PKK militants were killed and five others were arrested.³⁵ Authorities also seized eight Kalashnikov rifles, eight M-16 infantry rifles, 21 hand grenades, 10 mobile phones, and food supplies.³⁶

Yemen

On 29 December, the Al-Malahem Foundation, the media arm of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), posted a message on militant Web sites offering three kilograms of gold (worth \$160,000) to anyone who killed the US Ambassador to Yemen, Gerald Feierstein, and 5 million Yemeni riyals (\$23,000) to anyone who killed an American soldier inside Yemen. Al-Malahem claimed that the offer was valid for six months.³⁷ The US Embassy was said to be aware of the threat and taking it very seriously. Feierstein has been the US Ambassador to Yemen since September 2010.³⁸

³¹ Guardian, "US blacklists Syria's al-Nusra Front as terrorist group", 11 December 2012.

³² Al-Jazeera, "Dozens killed in Syria bomb attacks", 13 December 2012.

³³ BBC, "Syria crisis: Bombs 'kill 24' in Damascus suburbs", 13 December 2012.

³⁴ Reuters, "16 Killed in Damascus Car Bombing", 13 December 2012.

³⁵ Al-Jazeera, "Turkish troops 'kill PKK fighters' near Syria", 5 December 2012.

³⁶ Today's Zaman, "Turkish security forces kill 13 PKK terrorists in major operation", 5 December 2012.

³⁷ AP, "Yemen: Al-Qaida Offers Bounty for US Ambassador", 31 December 2012.

³⁸ Bloomberg, "U.S. Aware of Report of al-Qaeda Bounty on Ambassador", 31 December 2012.



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NORTH AMERICA

USA

On 4 December, Ahmed Ferhani, 27, pleaded guilty in a New York State Supreme Court to 10 counts of weapons possession, terrorism, conspiracy, a hate crime and other charges connected to a plot to attack synagogues and churches in New York.³⁹ Ferhani was arrested in May 2011 after an eight-month undercover operation by the New York Police Department. Ferhani pleaded guilty to the charges against him, and admitted conspiring to bomb synagogues and churches in Manhattan between October 2010 and May 2011, so as to send a violent message to Christians, Jews and other non-Muslim Americans. Ferhani is expected to be sentenced on 30 January 2013, and could face life in prison without parole.⁴⁰

On 11 December, Shaker Masri, 29, was sentenced in a US court to nearly 10 years in prison for plotting to become a suicide bomber and for attending training camps of Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen. He pleaded guilty to providing material support to a terrorist organization. Masri allegedly expressed admiration for the late Anwar al-Awlaki, a former leader of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). An Alabama native, Masri had planned to attend a training camp in Somalia, where he hoped to learn how to be a suicide bomber for Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen. The sentencing came two years after Masri's arrest, which was secured with the help of an FBI informant.⁴¹

On 21 December, Ali Yasin Ahmed, 27, Mahdi Hashi, 23, and Mohamed Yusuf, 29, appeared in Federal District Court in Brooklyn, NY, on charges of training to become suicide attackers on behalf of Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen in Somalia. According to court records of statements by FBI agents, between December 2008 and August 2012, the three men participated in weapons and explosives training with Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen militants, and allegedly agreed to support Al-Shabab and its extremist Islamic ideology. In early August 2012, the three men were arrested in Africa by local authorities, while en route to Yemen.⁴² They were transferred to US custody in November 2012.⁴³ All three men face a mandatory minimum

³⁹ Bloomberg, "Accused Synagogue Bomb Plotter Ferhani Pleads Guilty", 4 December 2012.

⁴⁰ New York Times, "Queens Man Pleads Guilty in Plot to Blow Up Manhattan Synagogue", 4 December 2012.

⁴¹ LA Times, "Chicago terrorist sentenced to 10 years in suicide bomber plot", 11 December 2012.

⁴² PTI, "3 men charged for supporting al-Qaeda linked group Al-Shabaab", 21 December 2012.

⁴³ Bloomberg, "Three Men Charged With Supporting Terror Group Al-Shabaab", 21 December 2012.



sentence of 30 years in prison and, if convicted of all charges, a maximum sentence of life in prison.⁴⁴

SOUTH AMERICA

Colombia

On 3 December, approximately 20 rebels of the Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC) were killed when Colombian security forces launched airstrikes on a FARC camp in Narino Province near the Ecuadorian border.⁴⁵ The airstrike was followed by a ground assault on three FARC camps.⁴⁶ General Jorge Segura confirmed the deaths of the rebels, including Guillermo Pequeño, commander of the Mariscal Sucre Unit and the group's suspected ringleader. The other fatalities were believed to include Pequeño's personal nurse as well as his third-in-command, known only as Mario. The military operation came soon after the Colombian government and the rebels had begun peace talks in Norway, in October 2012, and in Cuba, in November 2012. FARC had called for a Christmas ceasefire, but Colombian President Santos had rejected the offer of a temporary truce. Santos said that FARC would only be granted government support as a legitimate political party if it permanently renounced violence.⁴⁷

ASIA

Afghanistan

On 2 December, a group of suicide bombers attacked a joint US-Afghan airbase in Jalalabad, killing four Afghan soldiers and two civilians. It was unclear how many people were injured in the attack. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. According to Afghan authorities, nine suicide attackers acting in groups were involved in the attack. The first four attackers arrived at the perimeter of the base in explosives-laden cars, and targeted different entrances to the airfield. The other militants then followed on foot, engaging in gun battles with security guards. Local police said that bodies clad in Afghan police and military uniforms were found near the entrance to the base; it was not clear whether they were Taliban

⁴⁴ PTI, "3 men charged for supporting al-Qaeda linked group Al-Shabaab", 21 December 2012.

⁴⁵ BBC, "Colombia forces 'bomb Farc rebels, 20 killed'", 3 December 2012.

⁴⁶ Reuters, "Colombian forces kill at least 20 FARC guerrillas, talks to reopen", 3 December 2012.

⁴⁷ Telegraph, "Farc rebels killed in military strike", 3 December 2012.



attackers in disguise.⁴⁸ Authorities called this an ambitious, coordinated assault that had clearly been planned for some time. However, both NATO and Afghan authorities deemed it a failure, because the militants had not succeeded in penetrating the base.⁴⁹

On 7 December, a Taliban suicide bomber attempted to assassinate Afghan Intelligence Chief Asadullah Khalid in Kabul. Khalid survived the attack, but sustained moderate injuries to his abdomen and chest.⁵⁰ The bomber had arranged a meeting at a hotel with Khalid, who heads the National Directorate of Security (NDS), by posing as an emissary for the Taliban who had come to express interest in brokering peace talks. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.⁵¹ Authorities said that the suicide bomber, who was badly wounded in the attack, had concealed his explosives in his underwear. This was the first time an “underwear bomb” had been used by the Taliban in Afghanistan, in imitation of the tactic used by Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, perpetrator of the 2009 Christmas Day attack, who is now serving a life sentence in prison.⁵²

Azerbaijan

On 12 December, four men were sentenced to up to 14 years in prison for plotting "terrorist attacks" on the eve of the Eurovision song contest in Baku in May 2012.⁵³ According to a court official, the men were linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guards. Security forces arrested the majority of the group's members in March 2012 and killed the group's alleged leader in an operation in April 2012. According to the Security Ministry, those arrested had been trained in Iran, Syria, Pakistan; some of them had fought NATO troops in Afghanistan.⁵⁴

Pakistan

On 6 December, senior Al-Qaeda militant Khaled bin Abdel Rahman Al-Hussainan, aka Abu Zaid al-Kuwaiti, was killed in a suspected US drone attack near Mir Ali, North Waziristan. Al-Hussainan's wife and daughter were wounded in the attack; his wife later succumbed to her injuries.⁵⁵ Al-Hussainan had been promoted as the group's senior religious scholar after the

⁴⁸ Reuters, "Suicide bombers attack U.S. base in Afghanistan", 2 December 2012.

⁴⁹ BBC, "Afghanistan Taliban attack US base in Jalalabad", 2 December 2012.

⁵⁰ Guardian, "Afghanistan suicide bomber hid explosives around his genitals", 7 December 2012.

⁵¹ Guardian, "Afghanistan suicide bomber hid explosives around his genitals", 7 December 2012.

⁵² AFP, "Afghan spy chief 'wounded by underpants bomber'", 7 December 2012.

⁵³ AFP, "Azerbaijan jails 4 for Eurovision 'terror plot'", 12 December 2012.

⁵⁴ Reuters, "Four jailed in Azerbaijan for Eurovision terror plot", 12 December 2012.

⁵⁵ AP, "Sheik Khalid Bin Abdel Rehman Al-Hussainan Dead: Al Qaeda Leader Killed By U.S. Drone In Pakistan's Tribal Regions", 9 December 2012.



death of Abu Yahya Al-Libi, Al-Qaeda's second in command, in a drone strike in June 2012.⁵⁶ Al-Hussainan appeared in multiple Al-Qaeda videos focused on religious training. His death was announced on jihadist Web sites, and was later confirmed by US officials.⁵⁷

On 15 December, five Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan militants attacked a military base adjacent to Bacha Khan International Airport in Peshawar, which serves the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), killing nine people and injuring 45 others. The militants fired rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons at the airport, detonated a car bomb near a perimeter wall, and fired three rockets, two of which landed inside the airport and one of which hit a vehicle. All five attackers were killed in the ensuing fire fight.⁵⁸ The military then sealed off the area and launched a search operation. No damage to PAF assets or personnel was discovered.⁵⁹

On 22 December, a suicide bomber killed Pakistani politician Bashir Balour, 69, at a rally for the Awami National Party in Peshawar. Seven other people, including a senior police officer and Balour's personal secretary, were killed, and 18 others were injured.⁶⁰ Balour had delivered the keynote speech and was leaving the rally when the explosion occurred. He was severely wounded in the chest and stomach and later died of his injuries at the hospital.⁶¹

On 30 December, a bomb hit a convoy of three buses in Mastung, killing 19 people and injuring 25 others.⁶² Authorities discovered a timed device at the scene of the attack, which suggests that the bomb was detonated remotely. The buses had been carrying some 180 Shi'ite pilgrims from Pakistan's Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Provinces⁶³ from Quetta to Iran when the bomb ripped through one of them, destroying it completely, and damaging the two others.⁶⁴ Although no group claimed responsibility for the attack, authorities suspected Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which has targeted buses of Shi'ite pilgrims in the past.⁶⁵

⁵⁶ Telegraph, "Al-Qaeda commander Abu Zaid al-Kuwaiti killed in US drone strike", 9 December 2012.

⁵⁷ Dawn, "Senior Al Qaeda leader killed in drone strike in Pakistan", 8 December 2012.

⁵⁸ Deche-Walle, "Deadly Taliban suicide attack rocks Pakistan airport", 15 December 2012.

⁵⁹ Reuters, "Nine dead as Taliban attack airport in NW Pakistan", 15 December 2012.

⁶⁰ The News International, "Bashir Ahmed Bilour laid to rest", 23 December 2012.

⁶¹ BBC, "Pakistan blast in Peshawar kills provincial minister", 22 December 2012.

⁶² AFP, "Bomb attack on Shia pilgrim buses kills 19, injures 25 in Mastung", 30 December 2012.

⁶³ CNN, "20 Shiite pilgrims killed in Pakistan bus attacks", 31 December 2012.

⁶⁴ BBC, "Blast in southwest Pakistan kills Shia pilgrims", 30 December 2012.

⁶⁵ CNN, "20 Shiite pilgrims killed in Pakistan bus attacks", 31 December 2012.



Philippines

On 14 December, Mohd Noor Fikrie bin Abd Kahar, a Malaysian militant suspected of having ties to Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), was shot dead by police officers after allegedly attempting to plant and detonate an improvised explosive device (IED) in Davao.⁶⁶ Senior Superintendent Ronald dela Rosa, chief of the Davao City Police, said that an intelligence tip had led the police to Kahar, who had checked into the Sampaguita Hotel along with his Filipina wife, Anabelle Nieva Lee. At around 22:30, the suspects vacated their room. Lee, who was carrying a black backpack containing the IED, was immediately arrested. Kahar engaged in a three-hour standoff with security forces, holding up his mobile phone and threatening to use it to detonate the bomb. Panicked hotel guests and staff fled the hotel; in the chaos, Kahar and Lee attempted to escape to a nearby park. Police cornered the suspects as they were embracing, with Kahar still holding the mobile phone aloft; they fatally shot Kahar, and again took Lee into custody. The IED, which was fashioned from a 60mm mortar, was immediately defused.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Fox News, "Philippine police kill suspected Malaysian terrorist planning bomb attack in southern city", 15 December 2012.

⁶⁷ AFP, "Suspected JI bomber killed in Davao", 15 December 2012.