2015 Sees Dramatic Spike In Islamic Extremism Arrests

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Eighty-one U.S. residents were linked to Islamic extremist plots and other activity in 2015. This is nearly triple the total of each of the past two years: 28 individuals living in the U.S. were linked to such terrorism in all of 2014 and 22 in 2013.

These numbers include individuals arrested and charged, individuals who died abroad allegedly fighting with terrorist organizations, and uncharged minors who allegedly attempted to travel to join terrorist groups abroad. They do not, however, include the many individuals believed to have traveled abroad to join terrorist groups who have not yet been identified by name.

In July 2015, FBI Director James Comey stated that more than 200 Americans have traveled or attempted to travel to join extremist groups in Syria and Iraq.

The number of U.S. residents linked to terrorism per year has varied considerably in the years since 2001, with an approximate average of 28 U.S. residents linked to terrorism annually between 2002 and 2014. The highest number prior to 2015 was in 2009: 56 U.S. residents were charged with terror offenses or otherwise named as having fought or died fighting with terrorist organizations abroad in 2009. At least one-third of those individuals were linked to Al Shabaab, the Al Qaeda affiliate in Somalia, which had been actively recruiting Americans.
In the overwhelming majority of the cases in 2015, access to terrorist propaganda online, or communication with other extremists or co-conspirators through social media, appears to have played a role in the radicalization process.

Even more than in 2009, this year’s increase was related to a particular foreign terrorist organization. All but four of the Americans linked to terrorism in 2015 apparently acted in support of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) — and one of the others apparently supported ISIS even though he is accused of having fought with Jabhat al Nusra, Al Qaeda in Syria.

Indeed, at least 87 of the 109 U.S. residents linked to terrorism motivated by Islamic extremist ideologies since 2014 have supported ISIS — representing about 80% of the total number. This support is related at least in part to the group’s sophisticated use of social media communication and recruitment, as well as the high volume of coverage surrounding its activity and the ongoing presence of conflict in Syria and Iraq.

The number of people living in the U.S. linked to terrorism motivated by Islamic extremism in 2015 far exceeded the total in 2009. It may also increase further if unsealed indictments from 2015 are released in the coming months.

Reports as of March 2015 indicated that there were open investigations into potential ISIS supporters in all 50 states. In October, FBI Director James Comey indicated that there were 900 open investigations of suspected homegrown extremists, the majority of which are ISIS related. Moreover, as noted, many additional unidentified Americans are believed to be fighting with the group abroad. And as of February 1, 2016, 4 additional U.S. residents had been arrested on charges related to their support for ISIS.

An analysis of those individuals who have been arrested in 2015 may yield greater understanding of the demographics and risk factors of Americans who seek to propagate extremism at home and abroad.
Material Support Cases

Fifty-four of the individuals linked to terrorism in 2015 - 61% - were charged with providing material support to terrorism.

Of them, at least 30 had joined or attempted to join terrorist groups abroad. Twenty-six had allegedly joined or attempted to join ISIS, two had joined or attempted to join Jabhat al Nusra (Al Qaeda in Syria), one had previously joined Al Shabaab and was arrested in 2015 and one had previously joined Al Qaeda and was arrested in 2015.

At least nine of the U.S. residents charged with providing material support had allegedly attempted to recruit for ISIS or aid other Americans in joining ISIS and at least six had allegedly attempted to fund ISIS.

In addition, four of the individuals charged with material support had attempted to fund Anwar al-Awlaki and, through him, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula between 2002 and 2012 and were charged in 2015. One additional individual had provided weapons used in a domestic attack.

Three additional individuals were not charged with material support but allegedly also joined or planned to join ISIS and a fourth was not charged with material support but allegedly worked and possibly fought with Jabhat al Nusra. A fourth individual was charged with solicitation of a crime of violence (but not with material support) as part of his engagement with extremist material and propagation of threats online.

Individuals engaged in material support in 2015 generally did not work alone. However, the size of their conspiracies varied.

The largest plot involved at least 11 individuals from Minneapolis, MN. Six of the individuals were arrested in April 2015, one in December 2015 and one in February 2015. One individual was arrested in 2014 and one, who is believed to be fighting with ISIS in Syria and actively recruiting Americans, was charged in absentia in
2014. Finally, one additional individual arrested in December 2015 was charged with making threats to federal agents following the arrest of the group's leader; although he was not handed terror charges, the criminal complaint indicates that this individual also aspired to travel to Syria to join ISIS.

In February 2015, six individuals were arrested in New York, Illinois, and Missouri, for working together to fund ISIS.

Between February and June of 2015, five individuals were arrested in New York for a plot to enable two of them to travel to join ISIS.

Between March and June of 2015, five individuals were arrested in New York and New Jersey for a conspiracy that involved an attack against a New York City landmark and travel abroad to join ISIS.

The majority of the other cases involved between one and three individuals, often in contact with an undercover agent they believed was a co-conspirator.

**Domestic Plots**

Thirty-one of the individuals linked to terrorism in 2015 also planned or discussed the possibility of a domestic plot, with 20 plots discussed in total. Eight of those 31 individuals also allegedly aspired to travel to join ISIS. (Many were also charged with material support.) Almost all of the plots in 2015 appeared intended to support ISIS. One was intended to support either ISIS or Jabhat al Nusra, Al Qaeda in Syria, and one appeared to have been inspired by Al Qaeda's propaganda and ideology.

They include:

- **Christopher Lee Cornell** of Ohio was arrested in January for his alleged plot to attack the U.S. Capitol after failing to connect with ISIS members abroad.

- **Abdirahman Sheikh Mohamud** of Ohio was arrested in February and charged in April with joining Jabhat al Nusra. He allegedly returned to the U.S. with
the intention of perpetrating an attack against a military base in Texas. Court documents indicate that Mohamud supported both ISIS and Jabhat al Nusra, although he had fought with Jabhat al Nusra.

- **Abdurasul Juraboev** and **Akhror Saidakhmetov** of New York were arrested in February and charged with material support for terror. Court documents state they were attempting to join ISIS and discussing the possibility of a domestic attack.

- An **unnamed** minor from South Carolina was arrested in February and accused of formulating a plot to attack a North Carolina military base and then travel abroad to join ISIS.

- **Hasan** and **Jonas Edmonds** of Illinois were arrested in March and charged with attempting to join ISIS and plotting an attack against a military base.

- **Noelle Velentzas** and **Asia Siddiqui** of New York were arrested in April for allegedly purchasing bomb-making equipment with plans for an attack.

- **John T. Booker** and **Alexander Blair** of Kansas were arrested in April for allegedly attempting to undertake a suicide attack at the Ft. Riley military base.

- **Miguel Moran Diaz** of Florida was arrested in April on charges that he was a felon in possession of a firearm. Reports indicated that he planned to target Miami residents.

- **Elton Simpson** and **Nadir Soofi** of Arizona were shot and killed when they attempted to undertake a shooting at a **Garland, Texas community center**. They were allegedly assisted by co-conspirator **Decarus Thomas** of Arizona, who was arrested in June.

- **Usaama Rahim** of Massachusetts was killed when he drew a knife after being approached for questioning by law enforcement officers. He had allegedly plotted with **David Wright** of Massachusetts and **Nicholas Rovinski** of Rhode Island to behead Pamela Geller (head of the anti-Muslim
organization Stop Islamicization of America) on behalf of ISIS; the plot later shifted to attempting to behead a police officer.

- **Munther Omar Saleh** and **Fareed Mumuni** of New York were arrested in June after each attempted to attack law enforcement officials in separate instances. The two had allegedly planned to undertake an attack on a New York City landmark. Saleh and Mumuni were part of a conspiracy that also involved at least three other people, **Samuel Rahamin Topaz, Alaa Saadeh and Saadeh's brother**, but these three were apparently more focused on traveling to join ISIS and the degree of their involvement in the plot is unclear.

- **Justin Nojan Sullivan** of North Carolina was arrested in June for allegedly plotting an attack that included shootings in public venues and a bomb plot that involved biological weapons.

- **Alexander Ciccolo** of Massachusetts was arrested in July as a felon in possession of a weapon. Ciccolo allegedly planned to attack a state university.

- **Mohammad Yousef Abdulazeez** of Tennessee was killed after he opened fire at two military facilities in Chattanooga, Tennessee in July. The attack resulted in five deaths, in addition to Abdulazeez’s death. Abdulazeez was reportedly inspired by Al Qaeda propaganda.

- **Harlem Suarez** of Florida was arrested in July for allegedly plotting to detonate a bomb at a Florida beach. He also discussed attacking law enforcement officers.

- **Joshua Ryne Goldberg** of Florida was arrested in September for allegedly sending bomb-making instructions to and developing a plot with an undercover source. The plot involved building a pressure cooker bomb and detonating it at a 9/11 memorial in Kansas City, MO. Following his arrest, Goldberg claimed he had planned to alert law enforcement prior to the bomb's detonation.
- An **unnamed minor** from New Jersey was arrested in September for allegedly plotting to assassinate Pope Francis when he was in Philadelphia. The minor allegedly supported ISIS.

- **Faisal Mohammad** of California stabbed four people at the University of California, Merced in November before he was shot by police. In March 2016, the FBI released a statement indicating that Mohammad pro-ISIS propaganda was found on Mohammad's laptop, that he had visited pro-ISIS websites, and that he may have been "self-radicalized." All of the stabbing victims survived the attack.

- **Syed Rezwan Farook and Tafsheen Malik** of California were killed after **attacking Farook's colleagues at a holiday party** at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, CA in December. The shooting resulted in 14 deaths and 22 injuries. **Enrique Marquez** of California was charged with providing material support for this attack; Marquez and Farook had allegedly also plotted an attack in 2011 and 2012 but had not carried it out.

- **Mohamed Elshinawy** of Maryland was arrested in December and charged with providing material support to terror, obstruction of agency proceedings and making false statements. Elshinawy had been communicating with and receiving money from ISIS supporters abroad, allegedly with the intent of plotting and carrying out a terrorist attack in the U.S. on behalf of ISIS.

- **Emanuel Lutchman** of New York was arrested in December and charged with providing material support to terror. Lutchman allegedly plotted to kidnap and then execute individuals in a bar on New Year's Eve on behalf of ISIS. According to court documents, Lutchman also allegedly considered putting a pressure cooker bomb in the bar.

In addition, Enrique Marquez, arrested in December 2015 for conspiring to support terror, is accused in court documents of plotting attacks in 2011 and 2012, although he did not go through with them.
There was only one reported domestic plot in 2014, although there were also three instances of criminal acts motivated at least in part by online terrorist propaganda that year. The spike in plots in 2015 may be partially attributed to the increase in terrorist propaganda, particularly from ISIS, calling on followers to commit a domestic attack.

Only one plot in 2015, that of Mohammed Yousef Abdulazeez, can be fully categorized as a lone-wolf plot. Current investigations indicate that Abdulazeez probably acted without assistance. He also left a remarkably small online footprint, and may have deleted any social media accounts he did have prior to his attack. All of the other individuals accused of planning domestic plots in 2015 were either engaged in conspiracies or otherwise in contact with others they believed to be allies or co-conspirators for support and assistance.

**Threat to the Military**

As many as five of the 2015 plots targeted the U.S. military:

- **Jonas Edmonds** allegedly targeted the National Guard base where Hasan Edmonds had trained, using Hasan's uniform and knowledge
- **John Booker** allegedly attempted to attack the Ft. Riley base in Kansas
- **Abdirahman Sheikh Mohamud** allegedly plotted to kill soldiers at a military base in Texas
- The unnamed South Carolina minor had planned to undertake a shooting at a North Carolina military base.
- **Mohammad Yousef Abdulazeez** conducted a shooting against a military recruiting center and a naval reserve center in Chattanooga Tennessee, which resulted in five casualties in addition to Abdulazeez's death.

In addition, **Noelle Velentzas and Asia Siddiqui** allegedly discussed targeting military, government or law enforcement, although they apparently never chose a final target for their attack plot, and **Alexander Ciccolo** had allegedly planned to
attack military, law enforcement, and civilians before deciding to attack a university instead. **Terrence McNeil**, although not alleged to have actively plotted an attack, was charged in solicitation of a crime of violence for calling for the murder of members of the U.S. military online.

Military installations and personnel in the U.S. have long been targets for Islamic extremist plots, although the last year that they were targeted with this magnitude was in 2011, when there were four plots directed against military institutions.

Some examples of plots against military institutions since 2011 include:

- **Mufid Elfgee**h was arrested in 2014 for recruiting others to join ISIS and attempting to kill U.S. soldiers. Court documents indicate that he had purchased firearms with the intention of shooting members of the U.S. military who had returned from Iraq.

- Erwin Antonio Rios was arrested in 2013 and charged with possession of a stolen firearm. He is believed to have been planning to murder U.S. military personnel at Ft. Bragg.

- **Amine El Khalifi** was arrested in 2012 for a plot to bomb the U.S. Capitol building. Court documents indicate he had also considered military targets.

- **Jose Pimentel** was arrested in 2011 for a plot targeting military personnel returning from abroad.

- **Rezwan Matin Ferdaus** was arrested in 2011 for planning to fly explosives-packed model airplanes into the Pentagon in order to “disable their (the American) military center.”

- **Naser Jason Abdo** was charged in July 2011 with planning to bomb a restaurant frequented by Ft. Hood personnel and then to target the survivors with firearms.

- **Joseph Anthony Davis** and **Frederick Domingue, Jr.** were arrested in 2011 for a plot to attack a Military Entrance Processing Site in Seattle, Washington.
Two domestic plots against military institutions prior to 2011, the 2009 Ft. Hood shooting and the 2009 shooting at the Little Rock, Arkansas army recruiting center, resulted in casualties.

In addition, two of the individuals arrested in 2015 had themselves been members of the military:

- As noted above, Hasan Edmonds, a member of the U.S. National Guard, attempted to join ISIS and assisted his cousin, Jonas Edmonds, in formulating a plot against the base where Hasan trained.

- Tairod Pugh, a former U.S. Air Force mechanic, attempted to travel to join ISIS.

Another individual, Bilal Abood, had served as a translator for the U.S. military in Iraq.

A fourth individual, John T. Booker, attempted to join the military in order to commit an attack from within, according to court documents.

In 2014 there were no known veterans arrested but court documents indicate that Colorado resident Shannon Maureen Conley joined a military high school program, the U.S. Army Explorers. Like John Booker, she allegedly signed up with hopes of gaining training and experience that she could use on behalf of terrorists. Conley was arrested for attempting to join ISIS.

Some examples of other veterans arrested on terrorism charges motivated by Islamic extremism include:

- Matthew Aaron Llaneza, arrested in 2013 on charges that he had planned to bomb a Bank of America building, had been discharged from the marines.

- Sohiel Omar Kabir, arrested in 2012 for attempting to join the Taliban or Al Qaeda, had served in the Air Force.
- **Craig Baxam**, arrested in 2012 for attempting to join Al Shabaab, had served in the army.

- **Naser Jason Abdo**, arrested in 2011 for plotting an attack against Ft. Hood, had served in the army.

- **Abu Khalid Abdul-Latif**, arrested in 2011 on charges that he had planned to attack a Military processing Site, had served in the Navy.

Additional examples from 2011 and earlier can be found in the [ADL's report on Islamic extremism and the U.S. military](https://www.adl.org/). Notably, many of the former servicemen who plotted attacks also did so against military institutions - possibly in part because they had access to and knowledge of those locations.

ISIS has issued propaganda regarding U.S. soldiers and veterans, claiming they served in Iraq on a futile mission, highlighting casualties, and noting the difficulties veterans face upon returning to civilian life. A [video released April 14, 2015](https://www.adl.org/), for example, featured images of dead and wounded soldiers with the captions, “mutilated soldiers are coming back to your homeland close to desperation. Eyes are being lost, bodies without legs, we want your blood....” However, there is no information to indicate that such propaganda has influenced veterans and the existence of past arrests of veterans provides even less evidence for such causality.

**Threat to Law Enforcement**

As many as four of the plots in 2015 were directed against law enforcement:

- **Noelle Velentzas** and **Asia Siddiqui** of New York were arrested in April for allegedly purchasing bomb-making equipment with plans for an attack. Although they had not chosen a target, they indicated that they wanted to attack government, military or law enforcement.
As noted above, court documents claim that Alexander Ciccolo had initially planned to attack law enforcement, military and civilians before allegedly deciding to attack a university instead.

**Usaama Rahim** of Massachusetts, who was killed in a confrontation with law enforcement in June, and **David Wright** and **Nicholas Rovinski** arrested in June and from Massachusetts and Rhode Island, allegedly conspired to behead Boston-area police officers.

**Harlem Suarez** of Florida was arrested in July for allegedly plotting to bomb a Florida beach. Suarez also discussed placing bombs outside the houses and vehicles of law enforcement officers.

As noted above, court documents claim that Alexander Ciccolo had initially planned to attack law enforcement, military and civilians before allegedly deciding to attack a university instead.

In addition, Fareed Mumuni and Munther Omar Saleh of New York, and Usaama Rahim of Massachusetts all allegedly used knives in confrontations with law enforcement officials who were monitoring or attempting to question them.

A fourth individual, Emanuel Lutchman, allegedly plotted to kill civilians using a machete or dagger.

In addition, Amir Said Abdul Rahman Al-Ghazi, had also purchased a knife but did not use it. He had allegedly bought it for use in propaganda videos that he wanted to film. And court documents indicate that Jabil Ibn Ameer Aziz, who allegedly aspired to travel to join ISIS and recruited others to do so, was in possession of a "Go-Bag" packed with a modified kitchen knife, in addition to M4-style high-capacity magazines loaded with ammunition and other items.
ISIS has popularized the use of knives in its propaganda, both through its use of knives in beheading videos and through direct calls for supporters to arm themselves with knives or any other weapons available. Some of the same propaganda pieces also call directly for attacks against law enforcement.

A speech purportedly by ISIS spokesman Abu Mohammad Al Adnani in September 2014, for example, told supporters, “If you are not able to find an IED or a bullet, then single out the disbelieving American, Frenchman, or any of his allies. Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with your car. ...” That same speech also stated, “Strike their police, security and intelligence members....”

A January 2015 speech purportedly by Adnani called for attacks, “whether with an explosive device, a bullet, a knife, a car, a rock or even a boot or a fist,” and a video released in April 2015 stated, “Your neighbor is a kaffir (apostate)... take a big knife and give him what he rightly deserves.”

**Age**

The individuals linked to terrorism in 2015 range in age from 16 to 47. The average age is 27 and the median age is 24. Individuals linked to terrorism in 2014 ranged in age from 15 to 44, with an average age of 24 and a median age of 21. Between 2009 and 2015, inclusive, the average age of U.S. citizens and residents linked to terrorism was 28, with a median age of 25.

These numbers partially validate the understanding that individuals are most likely to engage in terrorist activity in their 20s, but also demonstrate that there is no one age demographic that can be associated with violent extremism.

The numbers also point to the large percentage of youths engaging in extremist activity. In total, 25 of the individuals in 2015 – approximately one third – were 21 years old or younger.
Three of the individuals linked to terrorism in 2015 were minors; one was 16-years-old at the time of his arrest and two were 17. Five minors were detained while allegedly attempting to travel to join ISIS in 2014 but charges have not been issued in those cases.

**Women**

Seven of the individuals linked to terrorism motivated by Islamic extremism in 2015 **were women**, resulting in a total of 16 women linked to Islamic extremism since the start of 2014.

Women engaging with terrorist groups is not a new phenomenon, but these numbers represent a significant increase, which may result in part from direct recruitment of women by ISIS. ADL documented 12 U.S. women in total charged with terror offenses motivated by Islamic extremist ideology in the 11 years between 2002 and 2013.

Only three of the women arrested since 2014 – Tafsheen Malik of the San Bernardino, California shooting and New York co-conspirators Asia Siddiqui and Noelle Velentzas – were alleged to have engaged in a domestic plot. Four of the women were allegedly attempting to send money to foreign terrorist organizations: two in a larger conspiracy to send money to ISIS, and two in a larger conspiracy to send money to Al Shabaab. The remaining nine women reportedly traveled or attempted to travel to join ISIS. According to reports, those eight included three minors from Colorado who attempted to travel together; one minor from Chicago who attempted to travel together with her brothers; three adults, two from Colorado and one from Philadelphia, who attempted to travel individually; one adult from Mississippi who attempted to travel with a male partner; and one adult from Alabama who reportedly traveled individually and is currently in ISIS-controlled territory.

**Families**
Of the 109 U.S. residents linked to terrorism motivated by Islamic extremism since 2014, at least 28 individuals were accused or implicated together with family members. Arrests of siblings, cousins, and other related individuals on terrorism charges have been similarly common worldwide. The presence of this phenomenon demonstrates an additional element of the important role that personal relationships and trust can have in the radicalization process.

Perhaps most iconic in recent years is the case of Boston Marathon bombers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev. Indeed, the basis for Dzhokhar’s defense rested on the argument that he would not have committed the attack were it not for his brother’s influence. Internationally, the alleged involvement of three brothers in the November 13, 2015 attacks on Paris that killed at least 129 people provides an additional example of this activity.

Radicalization and recruitment today is focused in online spaces that enable terrorists to reach, recruit and motivate would-be extremists more quickly and effectively than ever before, eliminating the need for in-person, face-to-face interactions. That does not mean, however, that such interactions no longer exist. To the contrary, they are only magnified by online reinforcement. While many individuals appear to be radicalized primarily via online means, others continue to join extremist groups – and may be statistically more likely to support or undertake extremist action – because of the influence of peers or relatives.

Examples of the U.S. residents linked to terrorism together with family members since 2014 include:

- **Syed Rizwan Farook**, a 28-year-old U.S. citizen from California, was killed in a confrontation with police on December 2, 2015 after he and his wife, **Tafsheen Malik**, a 29-year-old Pakistani national and "California resident, perpetrated a shooting at his office's holiday party that resulted in 14 deaths.
- Farooq Mohammad, a 37-year-old U.S. resident from Ohio, was charged on September 30, 2015 for allegedly attempting to provide material support to Anwar al-Awlaki, the English-language spokesman of AQAP. His brother Ibrahim Mohammad, a 36-year-old U.S. permanent resident was charged in the same indictment and was allegedly part of the same conspiracy. Their co-conspirators, 35-year-old U.S. citizen Asif Ahmed Salim and 40-year-old U.S. citizen Sultane Roome Salim were also brothers.

- Marcello Dsaun McCain, a 33-year-old U.S. citizen from California, was arrested on September 14, 2015 and accused of making false statements in a terror investigation regarding his brother, Douglas McAuthur McCain. Douglas McCain died fighting with ISIS in 2014.

- Jaelyn De'Shaun Young, a 19-year-old U.S. citizen and convert to Islam was arrested on August 8, 2015, together with her husband, Mohammed Oda Dakhallah, a 22-year-old U.S. citizen. Both were Missouri residents. Young and Dakhallah are accused of attempting to travel to join ISIS. The two had been married in a religious ceremony prior to their attempted travel, although they were not civilly married.

- Alaa Saadeh, a 23-year-old U.S. citizen from New Jersey, was arrested on June 29, 2015 for allegedly attempting to travel to join ISIS. His brother Nader Saadeh, a 20-year-old dual U.S. and Jordanian citizen from New Jersey, had been arrested in Jordan in March 2015 for allegedly attempting to travel to join ISIS. In August 2015, Nader returned to the U.S. where he was arrested and charged.

- David Wright, a 25-year-old U.S. citizen from Massachusetts, was arrested on June 2, 2015, following the death of his uncle, 26-year-old U.S. citizen Usaama Rahim, in a confrontation with law enforcement. Wright and Rahim had conspired along with one other individual to behead police officers.

- Mohamed Abdihamad Farah, a 21-year-old apparent U.S. citizen and Adnan Abdihamid Farah, a 19-year-old apparent U.S. citizen, both from Minnesota,
were arrested on April 19, 2015 along with four other individuals for attempting to travel to join ISIS. Mohamed was arrested in California, where he had gone in an attempt to cross the border into Mexico where he could fly undetected more easily, while Adnan was arrested while still in Minneapolis, Minnesota. According to court documents, the two attempted to travel separately to avoid risk of detection.

- **Guled Ali Omar**, a 20-year-old apparent U.S. citizen from Minnesota was arrested and charged in the same case as the Farah brothers. Omar's older brother, **Ahmed Ali Omar**, is believed to have joined Al Shabaab in 2007. Guled Omar also allegedly attempted to join Al Shabaab in 2012, prior to his 2014 and 2015 attempts to join ISIS.

- **Abdirahman Sheikh Mohamud**, a 24-year-old U.S. citizen, was arrested in February 2015 and charged with having joined Jabhat al Nusra, Al Qaeda in Syria, and then returning to the U.S. to commit a domestic attack. Mohamud's brother, Abditafah Aden (Aden), is believed to have joined Jabhat al Nusra in August 2013. Court documents indicated that Mohamud communicated with Aden before joining Jabhat al Nusra himself. In September 2013, court documents indicate, Mohamud told Aden he was “proud” of him and that he wanted to “join you in the high ranks as a Mujahid (fighter).” Mohamud also allegedly discussed travel plans and other logistical information with Aden before joining him in Syria. The relationship was particularly crucial because Jabhat al Nusra often requires inside references for fighters before it allows them to join the organization.

- **Ramiz Zijad Hodzic**, 40-year-old U.S. resident residing in Missouri, was arrested together with his wife, **Sedina Unkic Hodzic**, 35-year-old U.S. resident residing in Missouri, and four other individuals in February 2015. The group is accused of sending money to aid ISIS. Court documents indicate that the group used online tools to coordinate their activity and at least some members accessed terrorist propaganda online. However, they do not seem to have become radicalized primarily as a result of online sources.
Some of the sentiments expressed about ensuring that entire families can join ISIS together may be linked to ISIS propaganda promoting a vision of a religious utopia. As noted, in addition to multiple images of children playing and training in ISIS territory, the group also releases propaganda geared directly to women, characterizing them as essential building-blocks of a new society.

However, family members engaging in terrorism together is by no means a new phenomenon. Other incidents of U.S. residents linked to terrorism together with family members include Hor and Amera Akl, an Ohio couple arrested in 2010 for supporting Hezbollah; Paul and Nadia Rockwood, an Alaska couple arrested in 2010 for compiling a hit list of individuals; and Eljvir, Shain and Dritan Duka,

- **Hasan Edmonds**, a 22-year-old U.S. citizen from Illinois and his cousin **Jonas Edmonds**, a 29-year-old U.S. citizen from Illinois, were arrested in March. The two were trying to travel abroad to join ISIS together with Jonas's wife and children. The cousins seemed to prioritize having the entire family join ISIS. Court documents indicate that when Jonas was not able to obtain a passport, he and Hasan began to formulate a plan to attack a military facility and planned for Jonas to “send his family and then seek shahada (martyrdom) here in the heart of the kuffar (apostate) state.”

- **Mohammed Hamzah Khan**, a 19-year-old U.S. citizen from Illinois, was detained at the airport with his 17-year-old sister and 16-year-old brother in October 2014 while allegedly attempting to board a flight abroad to join ISIS. Khan and his siblings all penned similar letters to their parents asking the parents not to call the police, explaining their reasons for traveling, and expressing hope that the parents would join them in ISIS territory.

- Two sisters from Colorado, aged 15 and 17, were detained together with a friend while traveling in an attempt to join ISIS. The sheriff’s report that documents their case indicates that, when questioned about why they had traveled, “they said, ‘Family,’ and would not elaborate on any other details about their trip.”
brothers from New Jersey arrested in 2007 for being part of a group conspiring to attack Ft. Dix.

**Religion and Ethnicity**
At least 20 of the individuals linked to Islamic extremist related plots and activity in 2015 - just over one quarter - were converts to Islam. That percentage is comparable to the percentage in 2014. One of the individuals, Joshua Ryne Goldberg, is not Muslim.

The individuals are also ethnically diverse, proving yet again that there is no set ethnic profile for engagement with Islamic extremism. At least 19 of those arrested in 2015 are Caucasian (and non-Arab), including six Bosnian and five Uzbek natives and at least seven individuals who had converted to Islam.

At least nine of the individuals arrested are Somali-American. Between 2007 and 2011, there was growing concern regarding the numbers of Somali-Americans traveling to join Al Shabaab. Such travel has now shifted in favor of travel to ISIS, with American members of Al Shabaab even encouraging their contacts back home to travel to Syria, rather than Somalia.

**Criminal Background**
At least twelve of the individuals linked to terrorism in 2015 had a prior criminal record:

- **Jonas Edmonds** had been convicted of a felony for robbing a McDonald's restaurant
- Joshua Ray Van Haftan was a convicted sex offender
- Miguel Moran Diaz had been convicted of cocaine trafficking
- Elton Simpson had been convicted of lying to federal agents about his plans to join Al Shabaab
Approximately 20% of the individuals arrested on terror charges motivated by Islamic extremism since 2002 had a prior criminal record, having previously been convicted of felonies or misdemeanors.

- Nadir Soofi had been convicted of minor offenses including unlawful possession of drugs
- Leon Nathan Davis III had been convicted of drug trafficking
- Decarus Thomas had been convicted of felony disorderly conduct charges and two instances of DUI
- Amir Said Abdul Rahman Al-Ghazi (Robert McCollum) had multiple prior felony convictions
- **Alexander Ciccolo** had been convicted of operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol.
- Mohammod Youssuf Abdulazeez had been convicted of driving under the influence.
- Arafat Nagi had been arrested for attempting to murder his daughter.
- Emanuel Lutchman had an extensive criminal record, including a robbery conviction and mental state hygiene arrests.

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**Geographic Distribution**
The arrests in 2015 have taken place in 17 states, including eleven individuals arrested in New York; eight individuals arrested in California (two of whom were Minnesota residents) and Ohio; five each in Minnesota and New Jersey; four each in Illinois and Florida; three in Missouri; and two each in Kansas, Mississippi, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. Other states represented are Wisconsin, Florida, Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Texas, Georgia, Maryland and Rhode Island. A Tennessee resident was killed while perpetrating an attack in Chattanooga, Tennessee.
Three additional California residents were killed following attacks they had committed.

A third Massachusetts man was killed in a confrontation with law enforcement.

A Maryland man was arrested abroad and is being tried in New York.

Four of the individuals linked to terrorism this year were associated with Texas, including Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi, who were from Arizona and were killed while attempting to perpetrate an attack in Texas, Muhanad Mahmoud Al Farekh, who was arrested in Pakistan but whose U.S. residence was in Texas, and Asher Abed Khan, a Houston-area man arrested in Texas for attempting to join ISIS.

Since 2002, individuals have been linked to terror charges related to Islamic extremism from at least 31 states and the District of Columbia. Certain states stand out as having had particularly large numbers of arrests. There have been at over thirty individuals arrested per state from Minnesota, New York and California.

Appendix

A full list of individuals arrested in 2015 follows:

- January 14, 2015: **Christopher Lee Cornell**, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen from Ohio, was arrested and charged with attempting to attack the U.S. Capitol building.

- February 2015: **Unnamed** 16-year-old minor from South Carolina was arrested for a plot to undertake a shooting at a North Carolina military institution and then travel to join ISIS. He was charged as a minor in possession of a pistol and sentenced in March 2015 to five years in juvenile detention, followed by counseling.

- February 2015: **Hamza Ahmed**, a 19-year-old U.S. citizen from Minnesota, was arrested for attempting to travel to join ISIS and charged with lying in a
federal investigation. In May 2015 he was also charged with student loan fraud, which he allegedly used to fund his travel plans.

- February 2, 2015: Abdirahman Sheikh Mohamud, a 23-year-old U.S. citizen from Ohio, was arrested and charged with joining Jabhat al Nusra. Court documents indicate that Muhamud returned to the U.S. with the intention of committing a domestic attack.

- February 6, 2015: Ramiz Zijad Hodzic, a 40-year-old U.S. resident residing in Missouri, Sedina Unkic Hodzic, 35-year-old U.S. resident residing in Missouri, Armin Harcevic, 37-year-old U.S. permanent resident residing in Missouri, Nihad Rosic, 26-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen residing in New York, Mediha Medy Salkicevic, 34-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen residing in Illinois, and Jasminka Ramic, 42-year-old U.S. permanent resident residing in Illinois, were arrested and charged with sending funds to ISIS. All 6 are Bosnian natives.

- February 24, 2015: Abdurasul Juraboev and Khror Saidakhmetov, 24-year-old U.S. residents from New York, were arrested and charged with attempting to join ISIS. Court documents indicate that they had discussed the possibility of a domestic plot.

- February 24, 2015: Abror Habibov, a 30-year-old U.S. resident from New York, was arrested in Florida for allegedly aiding Juraboev and Saidakhmetov.

- February 27, 2015: Ali Shukri Amin, a 17-year-old U.S. citizen from Virginia was arrested for aiding another individual in joining ISIS. He had also provided online instruction on how to use bitcoin, a virtual currency, to mask provision of funds to ISIS.

- March 18, 2015: Tairod Nathan Webster Pugh, a 47-year-old U.S. citizen from New Jersey, was arrested and charged with attempting to join ISIS.

- March 26, 2015: Hasan Edmonds, a 22-year-old U.S. citizen from Illinois and Jonas Edmonds, a 29-year-old U.S. citizen from Illinois, were arrested and
charged with attempting to join ISIS. Court documents indicate the two were also formulating a plot against an Illinois military facility.

- April 2, 2015: **Asia Siddiqui**, a 31-year-old U.S. citizen from Brooklyn, New York and **Noelle Velentzas**, a 28-year-old U.S. citizen from New York, were arrested and charged with plotting to undertake a domestic bomb plot.

- April 2, 2015: **Muhanad Mahmoud Al Farekh**, a 29-year-old U.S. citizen from Texas, was arrested in Pakistan for allegedly having joined Al Qaeda. Al Farekh was charged in January 2015.

- April 3, 2015: **Keonna Thomas**, a 30-year-old U.S. citizen from Pennsylvania, was arrested and charged with attempting to join ISIS.

- April 4, 2015: **Miguel Moran Diaz**, a 46-year-old U.S. citizen from Florida, was arrested and charged with being a felon in possession of firearms. He allegedly planned to shoot people on behalf of ISIS.

- April 7, 2015: **Dilkhayot Kasimov**, a 26-year-old U.S. resident from New York, was arrested for allegedly aiding Juraboev and Saidakhmetov.

- April 9, 2015: **Joshua Ray Van Haftan**, a 34-year-old U.S. citizen from Illinois, was arrested and charged with attempting to join ISIS.

- April 10, 2015: **John T. Booker, Jr.**, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen from Kansas was arrested and charged with attempting to undertake a suicide attack at Ft. Riley military base.

- April 10, 2015: **Alexander Blair**, a 28-year-old U.S. citizen from Kansas, was arrested for allegedly having knowledge of and possibly aiding Booker in his attack.

21-year-old apparent U.S. citizen, were arrested in San Diego for attempting to join ISIS. All are Minnesota residents.

- April 23, 2015: Mohamad Saeed Kodaimati, a 24-year-old U.S. citizen from California, was arrested for making false statements involving international terrorism. Kodaimati had allegedly served on a Shari’a (Islamic jurisprudence) court affiliated with Jabhat al Nusra and fought with Jabhat al Nusra.

- May 3, 2015: Elton Simpson, a 30-year-old U.S. citizen from Arizona and Nadir Soofi, a 34-year-old U.S. citizen from Arizona, were killed while attempting to undertake a shooting at a Texas community center.

- May 14, 2015: Bilal Abood, a 27-year-old U.S. citizen from Texas, was arrested for lying to a federal agent. He is believed to have attempted to travel to join ISIS.

- May 21, 2015: Muhanad Badawi and Nader Elhuzayel, both 24-year-old apparent U.S. citizens from California, were arrested for attempting to travel to join ISIS.

- May 26, 2015: Asher Abed Khan, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen from Texas, was arrested for attempting to travel to join ISIS.

- May 27, 2015: Leon Nathan Davis III, a 37-year-old U.S. citizen from Georgia, was charged with material support to terror for allegedly attempting to travel to join ISIS. Davis had been arrested in 2014 for violation of his parole when he attempted to board an airplane, and had been charged in February 2015 with illegal possession of weapons by a felon.

- June 2, 2015: Usama Rahim, a 26-year-old U.S. citizen from Massachusetts, was killed when he drew a knife after being approached by law enforcement officials. Rahim had allegedly plotted with David Wright, a 25-year-old U.S. citizen from Massachusetts arrested later that day on a charge of conspiracy, to behead Pamela Geller, head of the anti-Muslim organization Stop...
Islamicization of America. The two later shifted their plans to allegedly attempt to behead police officers.

- June 10, 2015: **Reza Niknejad**, an 18-year-old U.S. citizen from Virginia, was charged in absentia for allegedly joining ISIS. Niknejad had allegedly been encouraged to travel by Ali Shukri Amin.

- June 10, 2015: **Decarus Thomas** (AKA Abdul Malik Abdul Kareem), a 43-year-old U.S. citizen from Arizona, was arrested for allegedly aiding and conspiring with Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi.

- June 11, 2015: **Akmal Zakirov**, a 29-year-old U.S. resident from New York, was arrested for allegedly providing aiding Juraboev and Saidakhmetov.

- June 12, 2015: **Nicholas Rovinski**, a 24-year-old U.S. citizen from Rhode Island, was arrested and charged with providing material support to terror. Rovinski had allegedly conspired with Rahim and Wright to behead police officers and had discussed traveling to join ISIS.

- June 13, 2015: **Munther Omar Saleh**, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen from New York, was arrested for allegedly conspiring to bomb a landmark site in New York City. Saleh's arrest occurred when he attempted to attack a law enforcement officer who had been monitoring Saleh's activity. Salah was arrested together with an unnamed 17-year-old co-conspirator.

- June 17, 2015: **Fareed Mumuni**, a 21-year-old U.S. citizen from New York, was arrested for allegedly conspiring with Saleh. Mumuni had also allegedly hoped to join ISIS. His arrest occurred when he attempted to attack a law enforcement officer who had come to his residence.

- June 18, 2015: **Samuel Rahamin Topaz**, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen from New Jersey, was arrested for allegedly attempting to travel to join ISIS. Topaz had engaged in conversations with Saleh and Mumuni, who allegedly encouraged his plans, as well as the Alaa Saadeh (see below) and Saadeh's brother.
June 19, 2015: Amir Said Abdul Rahman Al-Ghazi, formerly Robert McCullum, a 38-year-old U.S. citizen from Ohio, was arrested for material support to ISIS, being a felon in possession of a weapon, and distribution of marijuana. Al-Ghazi had attempted to recruit for ISIS and created pro-ISIS propaganda videos to post online. He had also discussed the possibility of a domestic attack.

June 22, 2015: Justin Sullivan, a 19-year-old U.S. citizen from North Carolina, was arrested on material support charges. Sullivan had been plotting a far-ranging domestic attack that included shootings and the use of explosives and biological weapons.

June 26, 2015: Alaa Saadeh, a 23-year-old U.S. citizen from New Jersey, was arrested for attempting to provide material support to ISIS. Saadeh had allegedly hoped to travel to join ISIS. Saadeh was in regular contact with Saleh, Topaz, and Saadeh's brother (arrested in May). It is unclear if Saadeh played a role in Saleh's bomb plot.

July 2, 2015: Adam Shafi, a 22-year-old U.S. citizen from California was arrested for allegedly attempting to travel to join Jabhat al Nusra. Shafi's indictment was unsealed in December 2015.

July 4, 2015: Alexander Ciccolo, a 23-year-old U.S. citizen from Massachusetts and a convert to Islam, was arrested as a felon in possession of a weapon. Ciccolo had allegedly plotted to attack a college cafeteria and a nearby bar frequented by students using rifles and pressure cooker bombs. He had allegedly considered attacking law enforcement, military personnel and civilians before deciding to attack the university.

July 16, 2015: Mohammed Youssuf Abdulazeez, a 24-year-old U.S. citizen from Tennessee, was killed after he opened fire at two military installations (a recruiting center and naval reserve center) in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Although the investigation into Abdulazeez's motivation is ongoing, he was apparently influenced by Al Qaeda propaganda, including the writings of Al...
Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki. He reportedly also suffered from mental illness.

- July 28, 2015: Harlem Suarez, a 23-year-old U.S. citizen from Florida was arrested for allegedly plotting to bomb a Florida beach in support of ISIS. Court documents indicate Suarez also allegedly discussed placing bombs in front of the houses and under the vehicles of police officers.

- July 29, 2015: Arafat Nagi, a 44-year-old U.S. citizen from New York was arrested on material support charges. He had allegedly attempted to recruit others to join ISIS and planned join ISIS himself.

- August 8, 2015: Muhammed Oda Dakhalla, a 22-year-old U.S. citizen from Mississippi was arrested together with Jaelyn De'Shaun Young, a 19-year-old U.S. citizen from Mississippi and a convert to Islam, for allegedly attempting to travel to join ISIS.

- August 10, 2015: Nader Saadeh, a 20-year-old dual U.S. and Jordanian citizen, was arrested for allegedly attempting to travel to join ISIS. Nader had previously been arrested in Jordan in May, and was then arrested and charged in August after he returned to the U.S. He had left the U.S. for Jordan on May 5, 2015. His brother, Alaa Saadeh, was arrested in June and both brothers were allegedly part of a New York and New Jersey based conspiracy that also included Samuel Rahamin Topaz, Munther Omar Saleh, an unnamed minor and Fareed Mumuni, all arrested in June.

- August 24, 2015: Ahmed Mohammed el Gammal, a 42-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen residing in Arizona, was charged with providing material support to ISIS. El Gammal allegedly assisted a 24-year-old New York man in traveling to join ISIS, primarily via social media. The New York man has not yet been charged and is believed to be in ISIS-controlled territory.

- September 1, 2015: A 15-year-old unnamed New Jersey resident was arrested for allegedly plotting to assassinate Pope Frances in support of ISIS.
September 10, 2015: Joshua Ryne Goldberg, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen residing in Florida, was charged with illegal distribution of information relating to explosives, destructive devices and weapons of mass destruction. Goldberg allegedly sent bomb making material to an undercover source, with whom he developed a plot to set off a pressure-cooker-bomb at a 9/11 memorial ceremony in Kansas City, MO. He had previously promoted extremism online, including statements inciting violence against the event in Garland, TX, which faced an attempted attack in May 2015. According to court documents, Goldberg may have acted as a "radical proponent of free speech;" following his arrest, Goldberg claimed he had planned to alert law enforcement of the plot prior to the bomb's detonation.

September 14, 2015: Marchello Dsaun McCain, a 33-year-old U.S. citizen residing in California, was charged with making false statements to federal agents regarding his knowledge of his brother's travel to join a terrorist organization in Syria.

September 17, 2015: Ali Saleh, a 22-year-old U.S. citizen residing in New York, was charged with providing material support to terror. Saleh allegedly made multiple attempts to travel to the Middle East to join ISIS.

September 30, 2015: Yahya Farouq Mohammed, a 37-year-old U.S. resident, Ibrahim Zubair Mohammad, a 36-year-old U.S. resident, Asif Ahmed Salim, a 35-year-old U.S. citizen and Sultane Roome Salim, a 40-year-old U.S. citizen, all former residents of Ohio, were charged with providing material support to terror. The men had allegedly conspired to travel to Yemen to provide money and gifts to Anwar al-Awlaki and, by extension, AQAP, between the years 2002 and 2012.

November 4, 2015: Faisal Mohammad, an 18-year-old U.S. citizen residing in California, stabbed four individuals at the University of California, Merced. Later evidence indicated that Mohammad may have supported ISIS. All the victims survived the attack.
November 12, 2015: **Terrence Joseph McNeil**, a 25-year-old U.S. citizen residing in Ohio, was arrested on charges of solicitation of a crime of violence. McNeil had allegedly solicited the murder of members of the U.S. military online by disseminating ISIS propaganda, circulating detailed information on U.S. military personnel, and explicitly calling for the killing of American service members.

December 2, 2015: **Syed Rizwan Farook**, a 28-year-old U.S. citizen residing in California and **Tafsheen Malik**, a 29-year-old U.S. resident residing in California and Farook's wife, were killed by law enforcement after the two had perpetrated a shooting at a holiday party in San Bernardino, California, which resulted in 14 casualties. Farook is believed to have been in contact with members of terrorist organizations abroad prior to the attack. Malik allegedly pledged allegiance to ISIS on her Facebook page on the day of the attack.

December 9, 2015: **Abdirizak Warsame**, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen residing in Minnesota, was arrested on charges of providing material support to terror and conspiracy to provide material support to terror. Warsame had allegedly served as the leader of a group of 10 Minnesota residents who had traveled or attempted to travel to join ISIS, including Zacharia Yusuf Abdurahman, Adnan Farah, Hanad Mustafe Musse, Guled Ali Omar, Abdirahman Yasin Daud and Mohamed Abdihamid Farah, all of whom were arrested in April. Warsame had allegedly aided those men in attempting to travel to join ISIS. Warsame himself allegedly aspired to travel to Somalia and then either wait for a time when, he believed, Al Shabaab would pledge allegiance to ISIS, after which he planned to joined Al Shabaab and fight with that group on behalf of ISIS, or else travel from Somalia to Syria to join ISIS.

December 11, 2015: **Khaalid Abdulkadir**, a 19-year-old U.S. citizen residing in Minnesota, was arrested on charges of threatening federal agents. Abdulbakir was part of the same network as Warsame and had threatened
the agents following Warsame's arrest. Court documents indicate that Abdulkadir had also allegedly aspired to travel to Syria to join ISIS.

- **December 11, 2015:** *Mohamed Elshinawy*, a 30-year-old U.S. citizen residing in Maryland, was arrested on charges of providing material support to terror, obstruction of federal agency proceedings and making false statements. Elshinawy had allegedly been in contact with and received funds from members of ISIS abroad with the intent of committing an attack in the U.S. on behalf of ISIS.

- **December 12, 2015:** *Maalik Alim Jones*, a 31-year-old U.S. citizen and former Maryland resident, was charged in the Southern District of New York for providing material support to terror. Jones had allegedly joined Al Shabaab in 2011.

- **December 17, 2015:** *Enrique Marquez*, a 24-year-old U.S. citizen residing in California, was arrested on charges of conspiring to provide material support to terror. Marquez, who converted to Islam and radicalized with influence from Syed Rezwan Farook, allegedly provided Farook with weapons, which Farook later used in the San Bernardino shooting. Marquez and Farook had also allegedly plotted attacks against a community college and against highway traffic in 2011 and 2012, but did not carry it out.

- **December 17, 2015:** *Jalil Ibn Ameer Aziz*, a 19-year-old U.S. citizen residing in Pennsylvania, was arrested on charges of providing material support to terror and aiding individuals in pursuit of travel overseas. Aziz had allegedly used 57 Twitter accounts to spread ISIS propaganda online. Court documents indicate that he expressed desire to travel to join ISIS in Syria and that he allegedly represented himself as someone who could facilitate travel to join ISIS and was contacted by multiple individuals about traveling there. Aziz is accused of facilitating the travel of at least 3 individuals to ISIS territory. Court documents also indicate that a search of Aziz's residence found a "Go-Bag" containing a modified knife and ammunition.
December 30, 2015: **Emanuel Lutchman**, a 25-year-old U.S. citizen residing in New York and a convert to Islam, was charged with providing material support to terror. Lutchman had allegedly plotted to kidnap and execute individuals at a bar on New Year's Eve on behalf of ISIS; court documents also indicate that he discussed putting a pressure cooker bomb in the bar.