



Terrorism and Political Violence Association

University of Birmingham  
Co-ordination and Research Team



## News Report 31<sup>st</sup> May - 6<sup>th</sup> June

Francesco Finucci

6/6/2016



- **Trends: terrorist attacks decline, but caution is necessary**
- **Iraq/Syria: new developments in the fight against ISIS**
- **Russia: a \$25 billion program for the defence industry**
- **Libya: Petrol Facilities Guard (PFG) retake Ben Jawad and Nawfiliyah from IS**
- **Somalia: al-Shabaab attack after US/Somali offensive**
- **Chad: Hissene Habré sentenced to life over atrocities**
- **Germany: IS cell arrested**

Picture: [NewsFirst/YouTube](#)

### **Trends: terrorist attacks decline, but caution is necessary**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> June, the US Department of State [published](#) its *Country Reports on Terrorism 2015*, finding the number of attacks and casualties to be in decline of 13% and 14% respectively. The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START, funded by the DHS) highlighted how the decline should be contextualised to be properly understood. In an [annex](#) to the document and in a later [article](#) published by *The Los Angeles Times*, the consortium underlined how some regions of the world – namely Middle East, North Africa and South Asia – remain a target for terrorism, with countries as Pakistan, Nigeria and Iraq being less affected than a year earlier, while the situation worsened in Afghanistan, Egypt, Bangladesh and Turkey. Moreover, some groups were found more active (as of the Afghani Taliban or Boko Haram), while others (the Pakistani Taliban and al-Shabaab) carried out less attacks. The Islamic State was found less active in Iraq, but with a caveat that activities in Syria increased. The consortium asked then caution, and statistical results be looked at critically.

### **Iraq/Syria: new developments in the fight against ISIS**

The fight against ISIS took another turn on Monday, when US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) [entered](#) deeper into IS-held territories close to Taqba (60km far of IS' capital Raqqa). The

operation came as a new phase of the struggle for the control of Raqqa ignited by SDF last week, but Islamic State forces were already carrying out a counterattack in Falluja against forces leading the assault on the city. The attack had been carried out by the Iraqi army and was expected to lead to the defeat of IS militants controlling a city considered of great strategic value. The fight for Falluja – as [suggested](#) by Qassim Abdul-Zahra – is then doomed to last. As another problem, the operations led by SDF [ignited](#) the reaction of Basma Kodmani, member of the Saudi-backed High Negotiations Commission, who claimed SDF also attacked groups of opposers of the regime. Consequently, Kodmani asked for clarifications about the role and goals of the SDF.

Things are changing in Syria as well. [According to](#) US officials, US-backed forces launched an offensive on the Manbij pocket North-East of Aleppo in order to deny the IS access to the country. US special forces will act as support for the operation to be successful, officials said. Meanwhile, aids [reached](#) Aleppo's suburb Darayya, just on time for the official deadline, set on 1<sup>st</sup> June. This result – DeYoung and Cunningham [argue](#) – is still far from satisfactory for the small suburb, held by rebels and surrounded by governmental forces.

## **Russia: a \$25 billion program for the defence industry**

Russian PM Dmitry Medvedev [announced](#) on Monday a change in the Russian defence industry complex development program for the years 2016-2020. The new program will amount for \$25 billion and will include the reequipment of the navy as well as the armed forces. The effort, according to Medvedev, is aimed at improving the innovation potential and the competitiveness of Russian weapons worldwide.

## **Libya: Petrol Facilities Guard (PFG) retake Ben Jawad and Nawfiliyah from IS**

The security forces protecting oil wells in Libya – known as Petrol Facilities Guard (PFG) - pushed Islamic State militants far from oil terminals early this week, [according](#) to *Reuters*. The town of Nawfiliyah - 130km far from Sirte - was indeed retaken by PFG after another town – Ben Jawad – had been recaptured on Monday.

## **Somalia: al-Shabaab attack after US/Somali offensive**

The terrorist group al-Shabaab claimed the attack carried out by militants against the Ambassador hotel in Mogadishu on Wednesday. The attack caused the death of at least 15 people, [according to](#) the *New York Times*, and followed an offensive mixing airstrikes by the United States and - more recently - an operation by Somali forces that allegedly led to the killing of several top al-Shabaab operatives.

## **Chad: Hissene Habré sentenced to life over atrocities**

Former Chadian dictator Hissene Habré [was sentenced](#) to life for the crimes committed during his rule. The trial took place in Senegal – where Habré lives in exile since 1990 – thanks to the pressure exercised by the former justice minister Aminata Touré. The decision might set an example for the struggle for justice in countries experiencing regime-change. The final decision by the Senegalese court was indeed also the result of the determination of victims to pursue justice, together with the support by expert lawyers, *Human Rights Watch* [claimed](#).

## **Germany: IS cell arrested**

Three Syrian men [were arrested](#) on 2<sup>nd</sup> June in Dusseldorf and accused of planning an attack under the Islamic State banner in the city. The men had reached Germany by blending into the wave of refugees reaching the country from Syria. The plan was unveiled by a fourth member of the group who – captured in France – had confessed it to police forces. Investigators think one of the terrorists may have links with al-Qaida's branch Jabhat al-Nusra.

Email: tapvauob@gmail.com