

APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGY OF JIHADISM IN EUROPE 1994–2015

This is the appendix of *Islamist Terrorism in Europe, A History*, by Petter Nesser. It offers an open source chronology of planned, prepared and executed terrorist attacks by actors linked to, or inspired by al-Qaida (and likeminded groups) in Western Europe, since 1994. The chronology is mainly based on media sources, but also on reviews of judicial papers and expert interviews.

The chronology utilizes a three-tier classification system. As information on terrorist incidents rarely is complete, they are categorized according to the extent to which they fulfill the following criteria of documentation: (1) known jihadi perpetrator(s), (2) identifiable target(s), and (3) evidence (bomb-materials, suicide notes).¹ Well-documented incidents have been categorized as “category 1” cases (C1), whereas less documented incidents have been defined as “category 2” (C2). Vague cases are classified as “category 3” (C3).

The reason for the categorization is to provide a nuanced sense of the threat and to ensure that plots are not missed which seemed insignificant at first, but turned out to be significant when additional information became known. Time is a factor when assessing terrorist plots, as more information continuously emerges from initial reports of arrests, investigations, trials and the aftermath of cases.

The chronology will be updated so as to reflect this. I caution that statistics based on the chronology (in the book and my other works) rarely matches the list fully, as it is continuously revised. Each case is referenced with one or more URLs to sources that contain additional information about the plot.

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1994

1994 GIA hijacking (C1)

On 24 December 1994, four members of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) hijacked Air France flight 8969 at Houari Boumediene Airport, Algiers. The flight was headed for France and it is believed that the plan was to down the airplane over Paris in a suicide mission. The operation was intercepted at Marseilles Airport, where the plane landed to refuel. There, the aircraft was stormed by French commandos. Three hostages were executed during negotiations in Algiers before the plane took off for France.²

1995

Well-documented plots

1995 GIA Sahraoui murder (C1)

On 11 July 1995, a prominent member and co-founder of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), sheikh Abd al-Baqi Sahraoui (and his bodyguard) were murdered in a Paris mosque, by one or more members of a GIA terrorist network. Sahraoui had appeared on a death list issued by the GIA the day before the killing. The murder weapon was found in the backpack of Khaled Kelkal, the leader of a GIA terrorist cell operating out of Vaulx-en-Velin (Lyon).³

1995 GIA Saint-Michel metro bombing (C1)

On 25 July 1995, members of Khaled Kelkal's cell placed a gas canister time-bomb on board a train which exploded at the Saint-Michel metro station in Paris. Eight people died and eighty-six were injured as a result.⁴

1995 GIA Arc de Triomphe bombing (C1)

On 17 August 1995, a bomb similar to the one that was used in the Metro-bombing exploded near the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. It is believed that Khaled Kelkal's cell was behind the bombing. Seventeen persons were injured in the attack. The device, packed into a butane canister, resembled the bomb that killed eight at the Saint-Michel metro station on 25 July.⁵

1995 GIA high-speed railway plot (C1)

On 26 August 1995, a powerful bomb device was detected on a high-speed railway track north of Lyon. The bomb was defective and failed to explode.

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The fingerprints of Khaled Kelkal were found on the bomb device, which was similar to the gas canister bomb used in the Saint-Michel attack.⁶

1995 GIA Paris outdoor market plot (C1)

On 3 September, a powerful pressure cooker bomb misfired at an outdoor market place in Paris, injuring three shoppers. On the same day a bomb placed at the Convention metro station in southwestern Paris was disarmed. The bombs were linked to a GIA operative named Yahia Rihane, who was plotting attacks to avenge the GIA members killed during the hijacking incident in December 1994.⁷

1995 GIA public toilet plot (C2)

On 4 September 1995, a bomb was recovered inside a public toilet near a marketplace South of Paris. Police officers disarmed the device. Evidence (e.g. how the bomb was constructed) indicated that the attempted attack was part of the ongoing GIA terrorist campaign in France.⁸

1995 Jewish school plot (C1)

On 7 September 1995, a car-bomb exploded outside a Jewish school in Lyon, hosting some 700 children. The bomb was set to explode when the pupils came out of the building, but the school's clock was slow. Fourteen people were injured in the attack. The evidence pointed to the GIA and Khaled Kelkal's terrorist cell.⁹

1995 GIA Maison Blanche bombing (C1)

On 6 October 1995, a bomb exploded outside the Maison Blanche subway station near Paris coinciding with the funeral of the GIA terrorist Khaled Kelkal. Twelve people were wounded by this bomb. The GIA terrorist Ali Belkacem confessed that he had taken part in the attack, and investigators found the fingerprints of GIA bomb maker Boulaem Bensaid on the bomb device.¹⁰

1995 GIA suburban train bombing (C1)

On 17 October 1995, a bomb exploded on board a suburban train in Paris. Twenty-nine people were injured, five of them seriously. The GIA terrorist Ali Belkacem confessed that he had taken part in the bombing.¹¹

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1995 GIA Lille market plot (C1)

On 5 November 1995, French police intercepted a plan by GIA terrorists to bomb an outdoor market in Lille, France. Ten suspects were arrested and several of them were later tried and convicted. The people behind the terrorist plot belonged to a network operating out of Lille, which was supervised by the GIA bomb maker Boulaem Bensaid.¹²

1996

Well-documented plots

1996 Roubaix Gang G7 Lille plot (C1)

In March 1996, members of the GIA offshoot dubbed “Roubaix Gang” placed a car-bomb on the streets of Lille, France, three blocks away from a G7 meeting attended by President Jacques Chirac. French police discovered and disarmed the bomb. The same day, they tracked down members of the Roubaix Gang inside an apartment in Lille. Four gang members were killed during the raids. The leader, Christophe Caze, managed to escape from the scene, but was rounded up and shot dead by police the next day.¹³

Vague plots

1996 Belgium Roubaix Gang car with explosives intercepted (C3)

In January 1996, Belgian police intercepted a car full of explosives during a routine control. Two Algerian members of the Roubaix Gang were driving the car. They started shooting at the police and managed to escape. The Roubaix Gang was led by a GIA affiliate and veteran of the Bosnian jihad named Christophe Caze. Twenty-five-year-old Caze was a French convert from Catholicism and a medical student, turned jihadi. The gang consisted mainly of Algerians and some Moroccans. It engaged in a wide range of violent crime, mainly armed robberies, to generate money for jihadis in conflict zones, but also undertook international terrorist actions.¹⁴

1997

1998

1999

2000

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Well-documented plots

2000 Frankfurt cell Strasbourg plot (C1)

In December 2000, German police arrested four Algerians in Frankfurt, who planned to bomb revelers at the Christmas market outside Notre Dame Cathedral in Strasbourg, using the explosive TATP packed into a pressure cooker.¹⁵ The Algerians were associated with al-Qaida and Algerian jihadi groups, and one of them had been part of GIA's network in Lille, France, during the terrorist campaign in 1995. They had received training in the Khalden training camp in Khost, Afghanistan. The Algerians were part of the North African "Abu Doha Network", operating out of the Khalden training camp and radical mosques in London.¹⁶

2001

Well-documented plots

2001 Beghal-network US targets in Europe plot (C1)

In September and October 2001, European security services, aided by their US counterparts, broke a terrorist ring composed of North African (Algerians and Tunisians), French-Algerian, and French jihadis, headed by the Algerian Djamel Beghal. This network plotted bomb attacks against US targets in Europe. One member of the network, the Tunisian Nizar Trabelsi, was sentenced for planning a suicide operation against the canteen of the Kleine Brogel US airbase in Belgium, whereas Beghal and other members of the cell were sentenced for planning a suicide mission against the US Embassy in Paris. The network was linked to al-Qaida and several North African groups, including GIA/GSPC. The terrorists had received training in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. In police raids weapons and explosives were seized, notably the peroxide-based explosive TATP.¹⁷

2001 Milan cell cyanide plot (C2)

In October 2001, Italian police had arrested members of the so-called "Milan cell", headed by the Tunisian Sami Ben Khemais. Khemais had trained in al-Qaida camps in Afghanistan and took orders from al-Qaida. According to Italian court documents cited by media, the cell discussed attacks with bombs and poison gas in Europe. Khemais and his accomplices were convicted for providing material support to terrorists, but not for plotting specific attacks.

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US authorities suspected Khemais of directing a plot to attack a US Embassy in Italy, but he was never charged with that.¹⁸

2001 GIA Stade de France plot (C2/C3)

In October 2001, French authorities arrested four Algerians suspected of preparing a terrorist attack at Stade de France during the first soccer match between Algeria and France since the Algerian war of independence in 1962. One of those arrested was Nasreddine M., a suspected GIA member. When searching the houses of those arrested police confiscated a bullet-proof vest, an explosives manual, a pen gun, al-Qaida propaganda, and, according to some reports, explosives.¹⁹

2001 Richard Reid shoe bombing plot (C1)

In December 2001, the al-Qaida associated Richard Reid tried to blow up a transatlantic flight from Paris to Miami with explosives (TATP and PETN) concealed in his shoes. The attempted suicide mission was prevented because passengers and crew restrained him. Reid justified his actions with reference to US support for the regimes in Egypt, Turkey, Syria, and Jordan. According to indictments, he trained in Afghanistan, and he received support and took orders from al-Qaida's chief of external operations at that time Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.²⁰

2002

Well-documented plots

2002 Tawhid cell Jewish targets in Germany plot (C1)

In April 2002, German police arrested a group of Jordanian jihadis belonging to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's group Tawhid. It is believed that the terrorists planned to assassinate a Jew with a pistol and silencer in Berlin, and to execute an attack with hand grenades and/or a pressure cooker bomb against a Jewish-owned restaurant/discothèque in Düsseldorf.²¹

2002 Milan Subway plot (C2)

In October 2002, Italian police arrested five North African jihadis in Milan suspected of plotting attacks against US representations in The Hague and Brussels. Authorities claimed that they were linked to the GSPC. Members of the cell were of multiple nationalities, and it was headed by a Libyan referred

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to as Faraj Hassan, or “Hamza”. Several of those arrested were believed to have trained in Afghanistan, and they entertained ties to militant Islamists in Iran and Malaysia. The arrests came after wire-tapping of telephone calls in which they talked about striking a subway with explosives.²²

2002 Al-Qaida Heathrow airplane crash plot (C2)

In November 2002, the radical preacher Abu Qatada told British interrogators that al-Qaida was planning to attack London’s Heathrow Airport. According to US authorities, Al-Qaida lieutenants in US custody spoke similarly of plans to hit European airports. The Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf’s memoirs detail plans involving the hijacking of aircrafts to London from Eastern Europe, and crashing them into Heathrow and other sites in the British capital in early 2003. A British Muslim convert, Andrew Rowe, who was convicted to fifteen years in prison for terrorism-related offences in 2005, has been linked to the attack plan against Heathrow. Rowe travelled to several jihadi conflict zones after his conversion, and is said to have spent time in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Chechnya.²³

2002 Chechen Network Russian Embassy plot (C1)

In December 2002, French police arrested a group of Algerians and French-Algerians in Paris’ suburbs suspected of plotting to bomb the Russian Embassy in the French Capital. The suspects had ties to Algerian jihad groups and al-Qaida. Chemicals and electronics suitable for bomb making were retrieved from the suspects’ hideouts. They also confiscated an NBC protection suit, raising concerns of a chemical attack, but there were no traces of chemicals on it. Investigators dubbed the cell the “Chechen Network” because its members had received training in the Caucasus and spent time amongst jihadis in Chechnya. One of them was referred to as a former emir of a GIA battalion, and the plotters were in contact with and received support from a GSPC network operating out of Paris.²⁴

Vague plots

2002 Heidelberg couple US military base plot (C3)

In September 2002, a Turkish man and his American fiancée were charged with plotting an attack on a US military base in Heidelberg, Germany. The attack was believed to have been planned on the anniversary of the 9/11

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attacks that year. Investigators found gunpowder, pipes, and three hundred pounds of chemicals suitable for bomb making among their belongings. The man was known to idolize Osama bin Laden and possessed a picture of al-Qaida's leader, al-Qaida propaganda and a bomb manual. I have not been able to find reports indicating that the couple was connected to organized jihadi networks.²⁵

2002 Italian US military cemetery plot (C3)

In October 2002, Italian police arrested three Egyptians in Anzio, South of Rome, suspected of plotting attacks in Italy. The suspects were in possession of explosives and a map of a US military cemetery. The press coverage did not relate the arrests to specific jihadi groups, but the incident was reported in connection with broader crackdowns on North African extremist networks in Italy.²⁶

2002 European ferries plot (C3)

In November 2002, US authorities warned European states of plans by al-Qaida to launch simultaneous bomb attacks against European ferries. The bombs were to be placed in trucks. US officials had been contacted by an anonymous source that specified 9 November as a possible date of an attack. The ferries of the Scandinavian Company Stena Line were mentioned specifically as targets. The threats prompted security measures by ferry companies all over Europe.²⁷

2002 London Tube Poison plot (C3)

In November 2002, British media reported that a group of North Africans (Algerian, Tunisian, and Moroccan) had been arrested, suspected of planning a cyanide attack against the London Tube. The suspected ringleader was believed to be associated with GSPC and al-Qaida. Three of those who were arrested were released after interrogation. According to media reports British agents had infiltrated North African extremist networks and detected plans to smuggle cyanide into the country. However, house searches failed to discover any chemicals or explosives, and turned up only false travel documents. Three suspects were charged under the Terrorism Act of 2000, but concrete evidence of an attack was poor.²⁸

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2003

Well-documented plots

2003 Bourgass ricin plot (C2)

In January 2003, British police arrested several North Africans (mostly Algerians) in North London suspected of having ties to al-Qaida and the GSPC, and of producing the lethal toxin ricin for terrorist attacks. During police raids, one of the suspects, Kamel Bourgass, stabbed to death police officer Stephen Oake.²⁹ House searches revealed poison recipes, bomb-making instructions, and a rudimentary laboratory for making poison. Prosecutors failed to produce sufficient evidence to charge the suspects with a terrorist conspiracy. All but Bourgass were therefore acquitted. Bourgass was sentenced to fifteen years in prison for slaying the police officer and for “conspiracy to cause a public nuisance by the use of poisons and/or explosives to cause disruption, fear or injury”.³⁰

2003 Rovigo NATO bases plot (C2)

In January 2003, international press reported that five Moroccans had been arrested in a building in the Northern Italian city of Rovigo. Italian police found 2.2 pounds of C4 explosives (the same explosive that was used in the Bali bombings in 2002), maps with churches and a NATO base in Verona encircled, as well as maps of central London and the London subway network. Press reports portrayed one of those arrested (Reduane Bnoughazi) as a leader and preacher within Rovigo’s Muslim community, and said the suspects had been in touch with al-Qaida associates in the UK.³¹

2003 Naples Pakistani NATO plot (C2)

In January 2003, twenty-eight Pakistani terrorist suspects were apprehended in one apartment in Naples. According to press reports, police retrieved a substantial amount of dynamite (TNT), religious texts, photographs of jihadi martyrs, false documents, maps of Naples with NATO installations identified, more than one hundred cellphones, and addresses of suspicious contacts around the world from the apartment. Amongst the arrestees’ belongings, investigators found a photograph of the UK’s top military officer, Defence Chief of Staff Admiral Sir Michael Boyce, who was going to visit NATO’s HQ in Naples within a month, with his face encircled. Despite the alarming evidence, an Italian court released all twenty-eight because the judge found it

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unlikely that terrorists plotting to attack a high-ranking British officer and NATO targets would deliberately stay in the same apartment were their explosives were hidden. The press speculated that Italian authorities had come under political pressure from Pakistani officials to abort the case.³²

2003 Belgium toxic letters attack (C2)

In June 2003, Belgian police arrested a forty-five-year-old Iraqi for sending letters laced with toxic powders and signed “The International Islamic Society”, to the Belgian Prime Minister, US, British, and Saudi Embassies and companies, and a court in which twenty-three Islamist terrorist suspects were being tried. Among the twenty-three suspects was Nizar Trabelsi, who was part of an al-Qaida-linked network headed by the Algerian Djamel Beghal, and who had made preparations for a suicide mission against the canteen of the Kleine Brogel US airbase in Belgium.

2003 Ganczarski Réunion islands plot (C2)

In June 2003, security services intercepted a plot by a German-based terrorist cell to launch a “Bali-style” car bomb attack against a nightclub in the French vacation islands of Reunion in the Indian Ocean. According to police sources, the cell received support from a Polish-German named Christian Ganczarski.³³ Ganczarski, who hailed from the city of Duisburg, was a convert who climbed the ranks of al-Qaida, and he is believed to have had a hand in several al-Qaida-run operations. According to media sources, one of Ganczarski’s Moroccan accomplices, Karim Mehdi, made a trip to the islands and undertook reconnaissance of potential targets. Ganczarski was later convicted for his role in the bombing of the Ghriba synagogue at the Tunisian island of Djerba in 2002. The Djerba attack was overseen by al-Qaida’s Chief of external operations, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM).³⁴

2003 Mahdjoub Costa Brava plot (C2)

In November 2003, a New York Times article on recruitment for the Iraqi jihad in Europe, made mention of a plan to launch a terrorist attack in the tourist location of Costa Brava in Catalonia, Spain.³⁵ A German-based militant and jihad veteran, Abderazak Mahdjoub, who had spent time in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya and had ties to militant networks in Spain, was put under investigation for his role in financing the attack plans.³⁶ However, no explosives or other evidence of an attack plan surfaced in the investigations.

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2003 Saajid Badat shoe bombing plot (C1)

In December 2003, British police arrested the twenty-four-year-old British-Malawi Saajid Badat for having intended to launch a shoe-bomb suicide mission on a trans-Atlantic flight in 2001. Police found explosives and a detonator in Badat's house, similar to the device used by the convicted shoe-bomber Richard Reid. Badat was recruited and radicalized by al-Qaida associates in Britain and Pakistan. He is believed to have been trained in Pakistan and/or Afghanistan together with Reid. He is believed to have met al-Qaida's then chief of military operations, Mohammed Atef. It is also believed that Badat and Reid received directives from al-Qaida through a middle-man or "handler", the Tunisian Nizar Trabelsi (serving a jail sentence in Belgium for planning a terrorist attack against a US airbase). Badat had second thoughts about becoming a terrorist and notified Trabelsi that he would back out. During his trial, Badat pleaded guilty as charged and was convicted to thirteen years in jail for his intentions in 2005.³⁷

Vague plots

2003 Heathrow SA-7 plot (C3)

In February 2003, the Guardian reported that British authorities had received intelligence that extremists with links to al-Qaida attempted to smuggle portable SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles into the UK, intending to fire them at airliners taking off from Heathrow Airport.³⁸ According to some reports terrorists linked to al-Qaida planned to break into the nearby theme park Legoland when it was closed for the winter, and fire missiles against a passenger plane from there.³⁹ Although open source information about the possible plot is scarce and elusive, the threat prompted security measures to be taken at Heathrow.

2003 Tawhid UK poison plot (C3)

In May 2003, the Guardian cited German intelligence documents saying that members of the Jordanian jihadi group al-Tawhid were plotting attacks with poison in the UK and other countries.⁴⁰ The leader of Al-Tawhid was Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and the group considered the London-based jihadi preacher Abu Qatada its religious guide. I was not able to locate other sources documenting a poison plot by al-Tawhid in the UK, but judicial documents from German investigations confirm that the group maintained support networks in the country.⁴¹

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2003 Ansar al-Islam Hamburg military hospital plot (C3)

In December 2003, there were media reports that German authorities had received information from US intelligence sources that the jihadi group Ansar al-Islam was plotting a car-bomb attack against a military hospital in Hamburg, which had been treating US troops wounded in Iraq.⁴² According to the reports, two members of the group had entered Germany with intentions to carry out the attack. However, I found no concrete evidence of such a plot in other sources.

2004

Well-documented plots

2004 Chechen Network France poison plot (C2)

In January 2004, French security arrested a group of French-Algerian jihadis suspected of plotting terrorist attacks using deadly botulism or ricin toxins. The suspects were relatives of Menad Benchellali who was arrested in connection with the plot by the so-called “Chechen Network” to attack the Russian Embassy in Paris in 2002. The arrests in 2004 led investigators to strengthen the theory that the Chechen Network was producing toxins for distribution among jihadis throughout Europe, in addition to planning a bomb attack on the Russian Embassy in Paris.⁴³ Benchellali was described by one official as a chemical expert and an expert in handling poison, who received his training at the Derunta training camp in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. According to the same source, he was actively trying to produce botulism toxin and ricin in France.

2004 Milan subway and Cremona church plot (C2)

In February 2004, Italian police intercepted a terrorist cell composed of Tunisian and Moroccan jihadis, which was plotting attacks against the subway systems in Milan and a church in the city of Cremona.⁴⁴ According to press reports (citing police sources and testimonies), the terrorists were to stage bomb attacks with the explosive C4. Reportedly, while laying out the plans among themselves, the plotters estimated that an attack on the subway would kill approximately two hundred and fifty civilians, and they discussed how it was to be followed up by an attack on the church in Cremona. It is believed that a main motive for the attack was President Berlusconi’s support for the “War on Terror”. Investigators linked the cell, which was initially set up by a Moroccan Afghanistan veteran named Ahmed El Bouhali before 2001, to

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al-Qaida and several other groups within its network, such as Ansar al-Islam, MICG and GSPC.⁴⁵ One European security official indicated to me that the network of which the cell was a part, was focusing on recruitment for the Iraqi jihad, and led to closer cooperation between al-Qaida and GSPC, which likely contributed to GSPC taking al-Qaida's brand name a few years later.

2004 Crawley Group London fertilizer plot (C1)

In February 2004, British police arrested a group of British-Pakistani jihadis, aged between seventeen and thirty-two, suspected of planning attacks in central London with a major fertilizer-based car-bomb.⁴⁶ The suspects had gathered five hundred kilograms of ammonium nitrate, and an accomplice living in Canada was responsible for building detonators. The terrorists staged their own improvised training camp and tested bombs in Malakand, Pakistan. They made contact with and received support from Kashmiri militants, met with high-ranking al-Qaida personnel and were assisted by extremists based in the UK, including individuals who later would stage suicide bombings against the Tube in London on 7 July 2005. One of the plotters worked for a company named Transco operating gas and electricity utility systems in Britain. He had stolen some CDs containing information about company facilities and gas pipes, which caused the prosecution to believe that the cell assessed attacks on infrastructure, an uncommon target for European jihadis in a historical perspective.⁴⁷ According to media reports, they had shown interest in gas pipes passing a cinema, perhaps thinking about causing lethal explosions.⁴⁸

2004 Madrid bombings (C1)

On March 11, 2004, a terrorist network composed mainly of North Africans (referred to as the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (MICG)), launched simultaneous bomb attacks against commuter trains in Madrid, killing 191 civilians and injuring more than 1,800. The terrorists were associated with al-Qaida's networks and at least one individual within the network is believed to have taken orders directly from al-Qaida.⁴⁹ The attacks were strategically timed to coincide with Spain's general elections. The terrorists wanted to influence the outcome of the elections in a way that led to the pull-out of Spanish troops from Iraq, and they succeeded. Spanish voters punished the conservative party for how they responded to the attacks, and elected the socialists who had the withdrawal of Spanish troops on their election program.

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2004 Dhiren Barot UK and US bombing plot (C1)

In August 2004, British police arrested a group of British-Pakistani jihadis in London, Luton, Hertfordshire, and Lancashire. The arrests were prompted by the interrogations of a captured twenty-five-year-old al-Qaida operative and computer expert, Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan, in Pakistan.⁵⁰ Files from Noor Khan's computer indicated that a UK-based terrorist cell had planned attacks against targets in Britain and the US⁵¹ In November 2007, the leader of the cell in the UK, a Hindu convert to Islam named Dhiren Barot, was sentenced to life in prison for plotting explosions and murder. In June, seven other members of the cell were also sentenced to between fifteen and twenty-six years in prison. Barot originally traveled to Pakistan to fight jihad in Kashmir before he joined al-Qaida and became involved in international terrorism.

2004 Madrid Supreme Court bombing plot (C1)

In October and November 2004, media reported that Spanish police had intercepted a jihadi terrorist cell composed of Algerians and Moroccans, which plotted a truck bomb attack against Madrid's Supreme Court.⁵² The terrorists also discussed bombing a train station and the headquarters of the conservative People's Party, and the cells attacks were supposed to involve suicide bombers. The arrests came after intelligence agencies listened in on phone calls between the suspects indicating that they planned attacks with explosives. According to Spanish counter-terrorism Judge Baltasar Garzon, the initiator of the terrorist plot had made arrangements to acquire 1000 kilograms of the explosive Goma 2 Eco (similar to that used by perpetrators of the 11 March bombings in Madrid). Five hundred kilograms were destined for a truck-bombing against the High Court. The aim of the attack was supposedly to punish Spanish authorities for, and destroy public documents relating to, investigations of Islamist networks in Spain. The cell has been referred to as "Martyrs of Morocco" and it was headed by the Moroccan named Mohamed Achraf, who fled Spain before capture, only to be arrested in Switzerland and extradited back to Spain again.⁵³ Achraf was a jihad veteran and member of the MICG, who maintained links to Moroccan jihadis across Europe, including the Dutch-based Hofstadgroup.

2004 Hofstadgroup Azzouz plot (C2)

In June and July 2004, Dutch police arrested a group of al-Qaida inspired Islamists suspected of plotting attacks against various targets in the Netherlands.

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Among the targets the militants showed an interest in were Schiphol Airport, the headquarters of the police security service (AIVD), and a nuclear reactor.⁵⁴ One of the detainees, Samir Azzouz, belonged to a group headed by the Dutch-Moroccan Muhammad Bouyeri, who later murdered the Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh. Samir Azzouz and his accomplices were arrested again in connection with the slaying of Van Gogh, but were released because of insufficient evidence, and then rearrested as suspects in the planning of attacks again in October 2005.

2004 Hofstadgroup Bouyeri attack on van Gogh (C1)

In November 2004, Dutch police arrested a group of al-Qaida inspired jihadis codenamed “Hofstadgroup” in The Hague and Amsterdam.⁵⁵ The arrests were made in connection with the murder of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh by one of the group’s lead figures, Mohammed Bouyeri. Most members of the group were young Dutch citizens of North African origin. They had been discussing multiple bomb attacks and assassinations of politicians and media figures in the Netherlands (and possibly abroad), and issued multiple threats online. Members and affiliates of Van Gogh’s killer have been arrested for terrorism-related activities both before and after the killing of Van Gogh.

2004 Ansar al-Islam Germany Iraqi prime minister assassination plot (C2)

In November 2004, German security services intercepted a plot by Iraqi and Lebanese members of the Northern Iraqi jihadi group, Ansar al-Islam, to assassinate the Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Alawi while on a visit to Germany. The group was headed by an Iraqi named Ata Abdoulaziz Rashid and arrests were made based on wiretapped phone calls indicating attack plans. One of the suspects made phone calls to lead figures within Ansar al-Islam’s German network, and asked for permission to prepare an assassination. He received an approval and was offered financial support. The plotters were convicted for murder plans.⁵⁶

Vague plots

2004 Moroccans in Rome terrorist plot (C3)

In April 2004, Italian media reported that the suspected suicide-bomber and al-Qaida associate Nizar Trabelsi said in an interview on the TV program “Panorama” that three Moroccans had received training at the jihadi training

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camp in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, and that they were planning to launch terrorist attacks in Rome, Italy. In the interview Trabelsi specified the aliases used by two of the Moroccans.⁵⁷

2004 Spain Rota naval base chemical attack plot (C3)

In May 2004, the Spanish press reported that al-Qaida was planning a chemical attack against a US naval base in Rota, in southern Spain. Information about the plot reportedly came from an Algerian jihadi who had been extradited to France from Syria. He was said to have been a close associate of the leader of al-Tawhid, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

2004 Brussels Moroccan suicide bomber plot (C3)

In June 2004, Italian police tipped off Belgian counterparts about a Moroccan located in Brussels who had talked on the phone with contacts in Italy, saying that he and three accomplices were prepared to launch a suicide mission in Brussels.⁵⁸ Belgian police promptly arrested the suspects, and stated to the press that it was certain that an attack had been in the making. However, investigations failed to link the suspects to an organized jihadi group, and they were later released.

2005

Well-documented plots

2005 Hofstadgroup Michael R. bombing plot (C2)

In July 2005, Dutch police arrested a seventeen-year-old Dutch-British national, identified in the press as Michael R., in possession of homemade explosives.⁵⁹ The youngster was radicalized already when he was 14, and he was very active online. He was suspected of being associated with the Hofstadgroup, headed by Theo Van Gogh's killer, Mohammed Bouyeri. The suspect administered extremist MSN groups and posted texts by al-Qaida and Van Gogh's killer, as well as threats against Dutch politicians.

2005 7/7 London bombing (C1)

On 7 July 2005, a terrorist cell composed of three British nationals of Pakistani origin and one of Jamaican origin, launched terrorist attacks against the Tube and a bus in central London.⁶⁰ The terrorists killed fifty-two people and injured hundreds. The terrorists had been recruited by al-Qaida from

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London and received training in Af-Pak. A British-Pakistani named Rashid Rauf acted as a “handler” for the cell on al-Qaida’s behalf. The terrorists had multiple contacts among jihadi extremists in the UK (notably the al-Muhajiroun network) in the time leading up to the attacks. The leaders of the cell, Mohammed Siddique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer were linked to individuals behind the planned car-bombing with a fertilizer-bomb in London uncovered in March 2004.

2005 21/7 failed London bombing (C1)

On 21 July 2005, a group of East African members of Abu Hamza’s Supporters of Sharia network in London tried, but failed to launch a copycat terrorist attack modeled on the 7 July operation against the Tube and a bus in central London.⁶¹ Fortunately, the bombs malfunctioned and no one was killed. The leader of the cell, Eritrean Muktar Said Ibrahim, had attended training in Af-Pak with the leaders of the 7 July cell and the 2004 fertilizer bomb-plot, and was persuaded by the al-Qaida handler Rashid Rauf to launch an attack in the UK

2005 Bourada Orly/DST plot (C2)

In September 2005, French police arrested nine Algerians, believed to be linked to the Algerian GSPC, suspected of planning terrorist bomb attacks against the French intelligence (DST) headquarters, the Paris Metro, and Orly Airport. Press reports said the plans had been revealed during the interrogation of an affiliate of the group by Algerian authorities, and that one of the arrestees in France had confirmed it when interrogated in France. According to some reports the cell had also attempted to connect with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s group in Iraq (AQI).⁶² The group was led by Safe Bourada who acted as a recruiter for the GIA network that bombed Paris in 1995.

2005 Glostrup Bektasevic terrorist plot (C2)

In October 2005, Danish police arrested a group of young Muslim extremists suspected of plotting suicide attacks against western targets in an unspecified European country.⁶³ The cell involved Danes and one Swede. The suspects were of different origins including Palestine, Morocco, Serbia-Montenegro, Turkey, and Bosnia. On 19 October, Bosnian police arrested two members of the group, a Danish-Turk and the Swedish-Bosnian Mirsad Bektasevic, in possession of twenty kilograms of explosives, weapons, a suicide belt and a

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martyrdom-video. The suspects communicated with each other and other extremists in multiple countries online, and interacted with militant Islamists in Denmark and Bosnia.

2005 Bouhrama/GSPC Italy-Norway plot (C2)

In November 2005, Italian police arrested a group of North African jihadis (mainly Algerians) believed to belong to the Algerian GSPC, and to have discussed large-scale terrorist attacks in Italy and abroad.⁶⁴ According to Norwegian press, the suspects spent time in Norway during the summer of 2004 trying to recruit for jihad in Iraq. There were also speculations in media reports that they plotted a terrorist attack against the synagogue in Oslo, and a downtown shopping center. According to Italian press citing police documents, wire tapped phone calls indicated that the militants were to place explosives onboard subways in France and Spain. However, no weapons or bombs were seized during the investigations.

2006

Well-documented plots

2006 Milan subway/church Bologna plot (C2)

In April 2006, Italian authorities announced the interception of a terrorist plot against the Milan Subway and a church in Bologna.⁶⁵ Media accounts held that the terrorist cell, headed by a France-based Tunisian named Mohamed Benhedi Msahel, planned to strike close to the time of the national elections in order to prevent a re-election of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.⁶⁶ According to some reports the cell was linked to a larger international terrorist campaign and the cell had ties to GSPC. The lead figure met with GSPC representatives in 2005 after trying, but failing to get to Iraq to join the jihad there.⁶⁷ It is believed that GSPC or al-Qaida wanted him to go to Algeria instead of Iraq because his resident permit in Italy made him suitable to launch a copycat of the Madrid bombings in Italy (subway or church), France (headquarters of the French security service) or Morocco (US embassy in Rabat). Msahel was further tied to Safe Bourada's network, and the plans to attack Orly airport and DST in 2005.⁶⁸

2006 German train bombs (C1)

In July 2006, two Lebanese students in Germany planted two propane bombs on board two commuter trains between Dortmund and Koblenz.⁶⁹ The ter-

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rorists constructed the bomb devices following online instructions, but they failed to explode because they were poorly constructed. The students were associated with the Lebanon-based jihadi group Fatah al-Islam, which operated out of the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp, and they fled Germany immediately after the attempted attacks, one of them returning to his family in Germany and the other heading for Denmark. The bombers maintained contacts with, and might have received backing and support from, jihadis in Germany, Lebanon, and Denmark. One of them came from an extremist family background. The suspects were active consumers of jihadi propaganda online, and the Israeli attacks on Lebanon, the caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed, and the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq were cited as possible motivations for the attack.

2006 Transatlantic airliners plot (C1)

In August 2006, twenty-four young Muslims were arrested in the UK suspected of plotting suicide-attacks on trans-Atlantic airliners taking off from Heathrow Airport. Three were convicted for the plans in 2009.⁷⁰ Most members of the broader network involved were British citizens of Pakistani descent, but among those arrested was also one ethnic Briton. According to British authorities, the suspects planned to smuggle homemade bomb devices (liquid explosives) on board the airliners in sports drinks bottles. Investigations revealed substantial evidence, such as bomb-making materials, martyrdom videos, and jihadi propaganda. Investigations further uncovered connections between members of the group, other UK-based extremists Kashmiri jihadis and al-Qaida. Evidence suggested that the operation was overseen by Rashid Rauf, who was the “handler” of several al-Qaida-linked terrorist plots in the UK.⁷¹

2006 Danish Vollsmose plot (C2)

In September 2006, Danish police arrested nine individuals (five Palestinians, one Kurd, two Iraqis, and one Dane, aged between seventeen and thirty-five) suspected of plotting terrorist attacks in Denmark. According to the Chief of the Danish Police Security Intelligence Service (PET), the suspects had gathered bomb-making materials (fertilizer and the explosive TATP). The security services believed they were to attack an unspecified target in Denmark. Press reports have speculated about ties to extremists in Germany, France, and the UK, but no international ties were confirmed by the authorities.

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2006 El Al plot Frankfurt (C2)

In November 2006, German press reported that police had detained six Islamists of Arab backgrounds suspected of planning to bomb an airliner departing from Frankfurt Airport by smuggling explosives on board the plane, at some point during the summer of 2006.⁷² According to *Die Welt*, a passenger plane belonging to the Israeli airliner company El Al was the intended target. The suspects contacted an employee at the airport and offered money in exchange for assistance in smuggling a bomb device on board a plane. The plot was stopped at an early stage, as the suspects and the airport employee had not been able to reach an understanding on payment for planting the bomb.

Vague plots

2006 El Al plot Geneva (C3)

In June 2006, Swiss authorities arrested seven Islamist extremists suspected of plotting to shoot down an Israeli El Al airplane taking off from Geneva Airport using a rocket propelled grenade (RPG). According to media reports, the suspects had discussed smuggling RPGs from Russia for the attack. However, Swiss officials denied speculations that police had actually confiscated rocket-propelled grenade launchers, surface-to-air missiles or explosives. The main suspects, an Algerian and a Libyan had links to the al-Qaida associated Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, and had communicated with a lead figure within Ansar al-Islam's network in Europe.⁷³

2006 Norway Synagogue shooting and alleged US embassy plot (C3)

In September 2006, Norwegian police arrested three Norwegians of Pakistani origin and one ethnic Norwegian suspected of plotting attacks against the synagogue, and the US and Israeli Embassies in Oslo. The main evidence against the suspects stemmed from audio-recordings of conversations inside a car during what appeared to be reconnaissance of the targets. The alleged leader of the group, a former criminal gang member, Arfan Bhatti, was arrested in Germany during the Soccer World Cup, due to concerns he could be targeting the event. At the time he was in possession of pictures of anti-tank missiles, suspicious notes, and a picture of a Palestinian girl killed during Israeli air strikes on Gaza. He was later convicted of aiding and abetting the shooting against the Oslo synagogue building with an automatic gun.⁷⁴ Bhatti would later become a central figure in the emergence of a jihadi extremist community in Norway from around 2009 and onwards.⁷⁵

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2007

Well-documented plots

2007 Parviz Khan soldier abduction plot (C1)

In January 2007, nine jihadis were arrested in the UK, suspected of planning to abduct and kill a Muslim soldier in the British Armed Forces who had served in Iraq (two of them were released without charges the day after the arrests). All of those arrested were Britons of Pakistani descent. The suspects planned to videotape the killing and to distribute the tape online via an al-Qaida propagandist situated in Pakistan. The ringleader, Parviz Khan, ran a support network for al-Qaida from Birmingham. He undertook several trips to Af-Pak and sent money and equipment to the region. He was jailed for life in 2008.⁷⁶

2007: Doctors' cell (C1)

In June 2007, al-Qaida inspired jihadis attempted to bomb a nightclub in Haymarket, central London, and another in Cockspur Street.⁷⁷ The attacks were planned and prepared as remote control car-bomb attacks (to be set off by using cellphone detonators). The bombs in London failed to explode, and the police began an intensive hunt for the perpetrators. The day after the failed attacks in London, the terrorists attempted a suicide car-bombing against an airport terminal in Glasgow using a car loaded with gas canisters. The car caught fire, but did not explode. One of the terrorists was fatally wounded during the attacks, and later died. Another attacker was arrested on the spot. All in all, eight people were arrested (seven in the UK and one in Australia). The operatives were of Middle Eastern/Asian origin and were all hospital workers, seven were medical doctors and one medical technician. Their ties to organized groups were obscure, but there were indications that one of the lead figures had held meetings with al-Qaida in Iraq.

2007 Perugia mosque (C2)

In July 2007, Italian police arrested three Moroccans, one of whom acted as an Imam, suspected of running a "school" for terrorists in the city of Perugia.⁷⁸ Police claimed that the terrorist suspects had maintained contacts with members of the al-Qaida linked Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (MICG) in Belgium, and that they had trained recruits in making poisons and explosives, and given instructions on how to fly commercial airliners. Police confiscated

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different types of chemicals (nitrates, acids and cyanide) as well as remote control detonators in the cellar of a Mosque frequented by the suspects. They also seized jihadi propaganda material suspicious documents indicating reconnaissance and attack planning, such as photographs of Rome's Fiumicino Airport, as well as a map of the main cities in Northern Italy with the city of Milan encircled.

2007 Glasvej case (C1)

In September 2007, Danish police intercepted an al-Qaida linked terrorist cell plotting bomb attacks.⁷⁹ The suspects had begun mixing chemicals for bombs. Although the exact targets were never specified, the plotters had made sketches pointing to public transport, such as buses and trains.⁸⁰ However, the eight people were arrested and two were charged. Most were Danish citizens of different ethnic backgrounds. According to US officials, US intelligence agencies helped the Danish authorities to locate the suspects through surveillance of online communications between the suspects and their contacts in Pakistan. One of the cell members, Pakistani Hammad Khürshid, received terrorist training in Af-Pak between September 2006 and September 2007, and a spokesman for the Danish Police Security Service (PET) said there was a direct link between the terror suspects and high-ranking al-Qaida members. The terrorists had searched for recipes of the explosive TATP, remote controlled cars that could carry twenty kilograms and 3V light bulbs (that can be used to make detonators) online. They also recorded a martyrdom video.

2007 Sauerland cell (C1)

In September 2007, German police and intelligence agencies uncovered a plot by two German converts and a Turk to execute car-bomb attacks against US interests and citizens in Germany.⁸¹ Frankfurt International Airport, the US Ramstein Airbase, and restaurants and discos frequented by Americans, were cited as possible targets. The terrorists were linked to an al-Qaida associated Uzbek jihadi group dubbed the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU). They communicated with members of this organization through coded emails, and IJU claimed responsibility for the attempted attacks after the suspects were arrested. The suspects had gathered explosives equivalent to more than 500 kilograms of TNT [Hydrogen peroxide] as well as military detonators to be used in the attacks. They also conducted reconnaissance of potential targets. The terrorists received explosives and weapons training in Pakistan close to the Iranian border during 2006.

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Vague plots

2007 UK Internet plot (C3)

In March 2007, the UK media reported that al-Qaida plotted to bring down the Internet of the country to harm the economy.⁸² News reports claimed al-Qaida-linked terrorists intended to infiltrate the headquarters of Telehouse Europe in the Docklands (which houses Europe's biggest web hotel, containing dozens of servers) and blow it up from inside. Reportedly, plans were retrieved from the computers of arrested suspects, but I found no further details about those suspects.

2007 Belgium jailbreak plot (C3)

In December 2007, Belgian police arrested fourteen Islamist extremists suspected of plotting a jailbreak to free the Tunisian al-Qaida associate Nizar Trabelsi, who was convicted to ten years in prison for planning and preparing a suicide car-bomb attack against a US airbase on the border between Belgium and Holland.⁸³ According to media sources, the plotters intended to utilize explosives and guns during the operation. According to investigators, the mastermind of the prison break plans was Malika El-Aroud, the widow of one of the Tunisian terrorists who killed Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud in a suicide mission for al-Qaida on 9 September 2001.

2008

Well-documented plots

2008: Cantata TTP plot Barcelona (C1)

In January 2008, in a counter-terrorism operation dubbed "Cantata", Spanish police arrested twelve Pakistanis and two Indians suspected of plotting suicide bomb attacks against the subway in Barcelona in connection with a visit to several European countries by President Pervez Musharraf.⁸⁴ Eleven Pakistanis and one Indian were convicted for terrorist offences after standing trial. Prosecutors believed attacks in Spain were to coincide with attacks in Germany, France, Belgium, Portugal and the UK (all contributors to ISAF in Afghanistan). Spanish police raided several sites and confiscated computers and bomb-making materials (including chemicals and timers), in addition to ideological texts and propaganda. The terrorist plot was overseen by the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, TTP), an alliance of Taliban and

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al-Qaida linked Pakistani jihadis under the leadership of Baitullah Meshud. The leaders of the cell were identified as Mahroof Ahmed Mirza and Mohammad Ayud Elahi Bibi.

2008 Andrew Ibrahim bomb plot (C2)

In April 2008, UK police arrested the nineteen-year-old convert Andrew Ibrahim in Bristol.⁸⁵ Raiding his apartment police confiscated homemade explosives (HTMD), and equipment for the manufacturing of detonators. In 2009, he was convicted of plotting a bomb attack against the local Broadmead Shopping Centre. The son of an English mother and an Egyptian Coptic Christian father, Ibrahim was described as a shy boy with a strong interest in music. He used to dye his hair, had several piercings, and was known to pursue a drug habit. During 2005–2006, he converted to Islam and became a Salafi. The conversion coincided approximately with his parents' divorce, after which he dropped out of school, lived for a while in a hostel for homeless people, began to attend mosques, and accessed sermons by radical preachers online.

2008 Nicky Reilly bombing attempt (C2)

In May 2008, the twenty-two-year-old convert Nicky Reilly attempted to detonate three bombs in a restaurant in Exeter.⁸⁶ Only one of the devices exploded while Reilly prepared the device in the restaurant's toilet. Suffering from Asperger's Syndrome and obsessive compulsive disorder, Reilly attempted to overdose at sixteen after feeling rejected by his father. He converted during 2002–2003 after he was dumped by his girlfriend and another attempt to commit suicide. He befriended local Kurdish immigrants learned Kurdish language. A Kurdish woman he acquainted on the Internet was said to have encouraged him to carry out the bombing. He was also influenced by Pakistani extremists and ideological material online.

2008 Ali Beheshti arson attack (C2)

In September 2008, Ali Beheshti (forty-one), a Pakistani extremist and follower of Abu Hamza, tried to commit an arson attack against publisher Martin Rynja because of his willingness to release a book entitled "The Jewel of Medina", which gave a fictional account of Prophet Mohammed's child bride, Aisha.⁸⁷ Beheshti a fierce activist against the Danish Mohammed cartoons, famous for dressing his child in al-Qaida gear, poured diesel into the

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publisher's mailbox and attempted to ignite. He was aided by two accomplices and the three of them were jailed in the end.

2008 Rachid Ilhami Milan plot (C2)

In December 2008, Italian police arrested two Moroccans, Rachid I. (thirty-one) and Gafir A. (forty-two), believed to be plotting attacks with bombs made out of petrol and fireworks against military barracks in Milan, police stations, a supermarket and a nightclub's car park in Lombardy.⁸⁸ Government officials described the pair as self-starters, who had tried to connect with al-Qaida networks in Iraq and Afghanistan before deciding to prepare attacks in Italy on their own. The plotters had not moved beyond reconnaissance and researching bomb-making and attack techniques online, at the time when they were intercepted.

2008 Rany Arnaud, French DCRI plot (C1)

In December 2008, French authorities intercepted alleged plans by Rany Arnaud, Nadir B. G. and Adrien to execute a suicide car bomb attack against the headquarters of France's domestic intelligence service DCRI in Paris.⁸⁹ The supposed leader of the group, the convert Rany Arnaud had made several trips to Syria trying, but failing to join the Iraqi jihad, and he reportedly connected with militants in Algeria attempting to obtain explosives. He also called for jihad against France because of the French contribution in Afghanistan on the radical Islamist website dubbed minbar-sos.com. On the forum he also called for bombs on the Paris metro. The three implicated were convicted to between four and six years in prison.

Vague plots

2008 Danish assassination plot against Mohammed cartoonists (C3)

In February 2008, Danish authorities apprehended several Islamist extremists suspected of plans to assassinate one of the cartoonists behind the 2005 Mohammed caricatures. The head of the Danish police security service (PET) said the purpose of the arrests was to intercept concrete murder plans at an early stage. According to media accounts the group of suspects included both Danish nationals and foreigners. Two Tunisians and a Dane were arrested. There was not sufficient evidence to prosecute them. The Tunisians were expelled from the country, whereas the Dane was released.⁹⁰

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2008 Rennes plot (C3)

In September (9/11), 2008 French police arrested five North Africans in Rennes who were suspected of plotting a terrorist attack.⁹¹

2009

Well-documented plots

2009 Manchester Easter shopping center plot (C2)

In April 2009, UK authorities expressed concerns about possible al-Qaida-style mass casualty attacks planned for the Easter holidays. Police arrested 12 suspects in a series of raids across Northern England, eleven of whom were Pakistani nationals, and ten of them held student visas.⁹² Authorities believed the suspects had planned to mount suicide-bomb attacks against shopping centers, a train station and a nightclub in Manchester. In raids police confiscated quantities of flour and oil that could be used in the production of hydrogen peroxide based explosives, as well as photographs that appeared to be surveillance of the potential targets. It later became known that the plotters were linked to a Norway-based cell plotting an attack in Denmark against Jyllands-Posten or an artist behind one of the Mohammed cartoons, as well as to the Afghan Najibullah Zazi plotting to bomb the New York Subway in September 2009, through an al-Qaida handler in Pakistan with whom they were exchanging emails.

2009 Mohammed Game Milan attack (C2)

In October 2009, the Libyan Mohammed Game attempted to break into the Santa Barbara military barracks in Milan and detonated a small ammonium nitrate based explosive device at the entrance while guards tried to stop him.⁹³ The attacker suffered serious fire wounds, and one guard had minor injuries. An Egyptian national and another Libyan were arrested, suspected of helping the Game acquire chemical materials and assemble a bomb. Mohammed Game was known to harbor extremist Islamist views, but investigations did not appear to reveal ties to organized jihadi networks.

2009 Rana/Headley Jyllands-Posten bomb plot (C1)

In October 2009, US authorities arrested two men suspected of plotting a truck bomb against the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten.⁹⁴ One of them,

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Tahawwur Hussain Rana (forty-eight), was of Pakistani origin and the other, David Coleman Headley (forty-nine) was an American citizen who had lived in Pakistan. Both men had graduated from a Pakistani military academy, and were believed to maintain ties with and receive instructions from a Pakistani militant known as Ilyas al-Kashmiri. Kashmiri had ties to al-Qaida and headed the Pakistani-based group named Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HUJI).

2009 Nigerian underpants bomber (C1)

In December 2009, a Nigerian mechanical engineering student, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, attempted to smuggle a homemade bomb device made out of PETN and TATP hidden inside his underpants onboard a US flight from Amsterdam to Detroit.⁹⁵ He managed to cause a small explosion, but fortunately, it only injured the terrorist and did not tear a hole in the aircraft. The Nigerian had studied in the UK, and connected with jihadis on travels to Yemen. Investigations revealed that he had received training, support and instructions from al-Qaida's Saudi branch, al-Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and its ideologue Anwar al-Awlaki.

2009 Mohammed Geele axe attack (C1)

In January 2010, a Danish-Somali named Mohammed Geele broke into the home of one of the cartoonists behind the 2005 Mohammed caricatures, Kurt Westergaard.⁹⁶ Armed with a knife and an axe Geele threatened to kill Westergaard who was forced to enter his panic room, after which Danish police rendered the would-be-assassin harmless by shooting him in his knee and shoulder. Geele had ties to the al-Qaida associated al-Shabaab and spent time with the group in Somalia, although there was little to suggest he acted on direct orders from al-Shabaab.

Vague plots

France and UK suicide bomb plot (C3)

In May 2009, Italian police arrested two jihadis believed to be plotting suicide operations in France and the UK, including Charles De Gaulle airport.⁹⁷ The suspects were identified as Bassam A. (sixty-two) and Raphael G. The former, who was Syrian, had acted as imam in a radical mosque in Belgium, whereas Raphael G. was described as a computer expert. Both men had travelled between Europe, Afghanistan and Pakistan and they were linked to the female

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Internet jihadi Malika al-Aroud (widow of one of the Tunisian suicide bombers who killed Ahmad Shah Massoud on 9 September 2001). The terrorist suspects had also been involved in smuggling Syrians and Palestinians into Italy.

2009 Adlène Hicheur case (C3)

In October 2009, Adlène Hicheur (thirty-two), a French-Algerian nuclear physicist was arrested after discussing terrorist attacks against French businesses and military facilities with representatives of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) online.⁹⁸ He communicated with the group via e-mails. He had previously been involved with a recruitment network for the Iraqi jihad operating out of Belgium. The case of Hicheur received much attention and raised concerns because the suspect was employed at a nuclear research center overseen by the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), and thus he was believed to possess unique knowledge and capacities that could be utilized for terrorism purposes.

2010

Well-documented plots

2010: Rajib Karim Heathrow plot (C1)

In February 2010, UK authorities arrested Bengali Rajib Karim, a BA computer expert for communicating with AQAP leader Anwar al-Awlaki via encrypted e-mails, and receiving instructions to smuggle explosives or a person carrying explosives onboard a transatlantic airliner. Rajib Karim (thirty-one) was convicted to thirty years in prison, by a British court in 2011.⁹⁹

2010 Roshonara Choudhry's stabbing of Stephen Timms (C1)

In May 2010, the female Bengali student Roshonara Choudry stabbed the British MP Stephen Timms.¹⁰⁰ She had dropped out of English and Communications Studies at Kings College and was inspired by the ideologue of al-Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Anwar al-Awlaki, via his online video sermons. In a police interview she said she wanted to become a martyr and that she was fulfilling an obligation and standing up for Muslims suffering in Iraq. It seems Choudry was a "lone wolf" who became radicalized and prepared for the attack on her own, and investigations did not tie her to organized jihadi networks.

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2010 Davud cell (C1)

In July 2010, the Norwegian police security service (PST) arrested a thirty-nine-year-old Uighur and a thirty-one-year-old Uzbek suspected of having ties to al-Qaida and planning terrorist attacks. In a simultaneous operation German BKA arrested a thirty-seven-year-old Norway-based Iraqi Kurd linked to the plotters, while he was on vacation in Germany.¹⁰¹ The cell had gathered a small quantity of chemicals suitable for making peroxide-based explosives (TATP), and it is believed that it was plotting attacks against Jyllands-Posten or Kurt Westergaard in Denmark on al-Qaida's behalf. It is also believed that the ringleader, Mikael Davud, had received training in Waziristan and received orders from al-Qaida's chief of external operations at the time, Saleh al-Somali. Investigations also indicated links to an al-Qaida linked network plotting attacks in Manchester, UK, and the Afghan Najibullah Zazi who attempted to bomb the New York subway on orders from al-Qaida in 2009.

2010 Doukaiev Jyllands-Posten bomb plot (C2)

In September 2010, a Chechen living in Belgium, Lors Doukaiev (twenty-four) accidentally set off an explosion inside a Copenhagen hotel suffering minor injuries.¹⁰² Investigators believed that the explosion occurred while he was preparing a letter bomb made out of TATP with the strength of a hand grenade, to be sent to Jyllands-Posten, the newspaper that first published the notorious Mohammed cartoons in 2005. The Chechen said he had acquired bomb-making skills when living in Chechnya. To my knowledge he was never tied to known al-Qaida figures, but he was associated to an Islamist extremist and al-Qaida sympathizer in the German city of Bremen, and had tickets for a bus heading to Belgium two hours after the explosion occurred, something that indicated that he was not going to launch a suicide mission.

2010 Europe Mumbai plot (C2)

In September 2010, UK press reported that European security services had disrupted advanced (but not imminent) plans to launch terrorist attacks in Britain, France and Germany, by a Pakistan-based, al-Qaida and Taliban-linked terrorist network.¹⁰³ The plans were believed to involve guerilla-style shooting attacks in crowded areas, inspired by the 2008 Mumbai attacks (hereafter Mumbai-style attacks). According to security officials, a senior al-Qaida leader going by the name of Younis al-Mauretani was a central organizer

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of the plot. He was in contact with Hamburg-based jihadis who had been going to Pakistan for training. Interestingly, a member of the 9/11 Hamburg cell still at large, Said Bahaji, met with people involved in the plans.

2010 Muslim cleric assassination plot (C2)

In November 2010, French police arrested five jihadis in Paris, who were suspected of plotting to assassinate the rector of the French capital's main mosque and leading Muslim cleric, Dalil Boubakeur.¹⁰⁴ All of the suspects held French passports and some of them had been fighting against ISAF with Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan. Boubakeur had been placed under armed protection after receiving death threats from extremists in connection with the French ban on burkas. The arrestees were seen as part of a jihad network working out of the tribal areas in the Af-Pak border region. The case illustrated the enmity between jihadis and moderate Islamists.

2010 London Christmas plot (C2)

In December 2010, UK authorities disrupted a plot to launch a bomb or Mumbai-style shootings against the London Stock Exchange, Parliament, the US embassy, and to assassinate the Mayor of London.¹⁰⁵ The plot involved nine Britons of Pakistani and Bengali origin who belonged to local Islamist extremist networks including Islam4UK, and had become increasingly radicalized in the time leading up to the arrests. They had partaken in fierce protesting against English Defence League (EDL), before becoming followers of Yemen-based al-Qaida ideologue Anwar al-Awlaki and AQAP. Reportedly, the terrorists considered the Covenant of Security between Muslims and Britain broken, and they discussed going abroad to obtain additional training to pursue a terrorist shooting campaign in London.

2010 Stockholm suicide bomber (C1)

In December 2010, a Swedish-Iraqi suicide bomber blew himself up in central Stockholm, wounding two passersby's.¹⁰⁶ The suspect, a twenty-eight-year-old Iraqi, had prepared a written martyrdom testament and one audio-recording stating he wanted to avenge Swedish military participation in Afghanistan and the mocking of Islam by the Swedish artist Lars Vilks. The bomber carried some explosives on him, and had placed others in a car. The explosions occurred near a busy shopping street during Christmas preparations and were potentially very lethal. Fortunately, the bombs went off prematurely and sev-

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eral failed to explode, something that prevented mass casualties. The suicide bomber immigrated to Sweden with his family when he was ten. He later studied in Luton, UK where he is believed to have become radicalized and traveled in the Middle East during the time leading up to the attack. Iraqi security sources later claimed that the suicide bomber had gone through a three-month training course apparently organized by the Islamic State of Iraq (al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI)). Investigations have also revealed links to an accomplice based in Scotland who helped finance the attack.

2010: Jyllands-Posten Mumbai plot (C1)

In December 2010, five men were arrested in Sweden and Denmark suspected of preparing a Mumbai-style terrorist attack against the offices of the Copenhagen newspaper Jyllands-Posten.¹⁰⁷ The Danish Police Security Service (PET) believed the suspects planned to storm the localities of the newspaper and kill as many as possible. If they failed to get inside the building they planned to enter other buildings in the area and kill innocents. It is also highly conceivable that the plotters could have created a prolonged hostage taking situation. During arrests police seized a machine gun and plastic strips suitable to be used as handcuffs. Three of the suspects were Swedish nationals, one was a Tunisian citizen and the last was an Iraqi asylum seeker living in Denmark.

Vague plots

2010 Jewish and NATO targets in Belgium plot (C3)

In November 2010, Belgian authorities arrested eleven Islamist extremists in Antwerp suspected of planning attacks against unspecified targets in Belgium.¹⁰⁸ One security official told the press that the suspects had held general discussions about attacks against Jewish interests and NATO vehicles with associates in Germany and the Netherlands, but no targets or the time of an attack had been specified. Investigators looked into links between the suspects and the Belgian jihadi activist network dubbed Sharia4Belgium as well as the Ansar al-Mujahidin website. The investigations also involved arrests in Spain, Morocco and Saudi Arabia.

2010 Somali RPG plot on military helicopter (C3)

In December 2010, Dutch police arrested twelve Somali men aged nineteen to forty-eight in Rotterdam suspected of plotting a terrorist attack in the

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Netherlands.¹⁰⁹ An anonymous intelligence source told the Dutch newspaper *Telegraaf* that some of those arrested planned to use rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) to attack an Apache helicopter at Gilze-Rijen air base near Rotterdam.

2011

Well-documented plots

2011 Arid Uka Frankfurt shooting (C1)

In January 2011, the German Kosovar Arid Uka shot and killed two American soldiers at Frankfurt international airport and wounded several others. He entered a shuttle bus and started firing at servicemen sitting in seats while shouting the jihadi slogan “Allahu Akbar”. His gun jammed and Uka escaped, but was later hunted down and captured by two of the victimized soldiers. Uka was triggered by a sequence in an IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) propaganda movie showing clips from a feature movie, which displayed American soldiers raping a young Iraqi girl. He also had contacts with well-known Salafis in Frankfurt and other parts of Germany via social media, but did not seem to have belonged to an organized group. He came from a religious family and did relatively well in school, but suffered from some psychological problems. Reportedly he withdrew from social contacts in the months leading up to the attacks, spending much of his time surfing jihadi websites.¹¹⁰

2011 El-Kebir Düsseldorf cell (C2)

In April 2011, German authorities disrupted an al-Qaida linked terrorist cell led by the Moroccan Abdeladim El-Kebir. El-Kebir had attended training in Waziristan, Pakistan, in 2010. He was tasked by al-Qaida handler Younis al-Mauretani to carry out mass casualty bomb attacks in Germany, most likely against a bus or other transportation. El-Kebir was said to have recruited and indoctrinated three other cell-members, and the plotters had started assembling bomb-making materials and scouting targets before the cell was disrupted. In May, one individual referred to as Halil S., who escaped the first arrests, pursued a “Mumbai-style” hand weapons-based attack on his own, seeking advice and receiving instructions from Anwar al-Awlaki and AQAP in Yemen.¹¹¹

2011 Mohammed Sajid Khan plot (C2)

In August 2011, Mohammed Sajid Khan (thirty-two), and Shasta Khan (thirty-seven), of Oldham, Greater Manchester were charged with plotting

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terrorist acts in the UK.¹¹² From their belongings investigators confiscated bomb-making chemicals (peroxides) and al-Qaida manuals (Inspire Magazine and counter-surveillance/counter-interrogation techniques). Reconnaissance of Jewish targets in Manchester had been carried out, and the suspects had shown an interest in Abu Musab al-Suri's doctrine of decentralized jihad.

2011: Naseer Birmingham cell (C1)

In September 2011, UK security services launched an operation against a terrorist cell composed of British-Pakistanis believed to be plotting a series of suicide bombings.¹¹³ The cell was headed by Irfan Naseer, who had attended Harakat al-Mujahidin (HuM) training facilities in Pakistan in 2009 and later connected with al-Qaida handlers in Waziristan during the spring 2011.¹¹⁴ Reportedly, the bombs were supposed to be made from ammonium nitrate.

Vague plots

2011 Røda Sten Vilks assassination plot Denmark (C3)

In September 2011, four people were arrested on suspicion of plans to assassinate the Swedish artist Lars Vilks at an exhibition at Røda Sten cultural center in Aarhus, Denmark.¹¹⁵ The alleged plotters were of Somali and Iraqi origins and aged between twenty-three and twenty-six. Reportedly, one of the men did online research into Vilks' self-announced visit at the exhibition, and bought a pocket knife believed to be a potential weapon. The evidence was not sufficient to have the alleged plotters convicted on terrorism or murder charges and they were only fined for carrying a knife in a public place.

2011 Westergaard assassination plot (C3)

In September 2011, Norwegian media reported that the Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard cancelled his participation in a book release at Litteraturhuset cultural center in central Oslo because of an alleged assassination plot.¹¹⁶ Officially the artist cancelled due to his health condition, but he indicated to the press that this was not the real reason. Neither Danish nor Norwegian security services provided any additional explanations besides stating that Westergaard was living under constant threat. Coinciding with the news about Westergaard's return to Denmark, heavily armed operators from the police's emergency response unit (Delta) arrested a well-known former criminal for a minor traffic offence. Reportedly, police believed that he had access

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to automatic weapons and explosives suitable for assassination plans. Although it has not been confirmed by official sources, media sources strongly indicated it was Arfan Bhatti, a Norwegian-Pakistani and former criminal turned Islamist, who was prosecuted and convicted of aiding and abetting a shooting against the Oslo Synagogue in 2006. He was also prosecuted for alleged terrorist plans against the US embassy the same year, but acquitted.

2012

Well-documented plots

2012 Mohammed Merah shooting spree (C1)

In March 2012, the young French-Algerian Mohammed Merah executed a series of single actor shooting attacks in Montauban and Toulouse, Southern France.¹¹⁷ Merah first killed three French soldiers in two separate assaults with an automatic pistol, approaching and escaping the attack scene on a motor-bike. Using a similar *modus operandi* he then launched a horrendous attack on a Jewish school killing one teacher and three children. Merah was first portrayed as a lone wolf, but he had interacted with an extremist network in France, other European countries and the Middle East, and he attended training camps associated with the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) in Waziristan, Pakistan, where he also is believed to have met al-Qaida handlers who told him to do something in France.¹¹⁸ Merah was rounded up and killed by security forces after a thirty-hour siege. He told police investigators he acted on behalf of al-Qaida.¹¹⁹

2012 Mohamed Jarmoune Milan synagogue plot (C2)

In March 2012, Italian police arrested Mohamed Jarmoune in Brescia, Northern Italy, on suspicion of plotting a terrorist attack against the Via Della Guastalla synagogue in Milan. He had conducted detailed research into the premises of the synagogue, and had discussed terrorist tactics for a “jihad mission” online, via fake Facebook-profiles. The incident also led to the arrest of a woman in the UK, with whom Jarmoune shared extremist materials.¹²⁰

2012 Luton cell (C2)

In April 2012, UK anti-terrorism police arrested five men, aged between twenty-one and thirty, in Luton, who were suspected of plotting terrorist attacks. Three of them were of Pakistani origin, and one was from a Bengali

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background. According to media reports, those arrested had been involved in a wide range of activities, encouraging and supporting militancy, and they wanted to become foreign fighters in Af-Pak. However, there were also reports that they had pursued a concrete plan to launch an attack on a British military facility with an improvised explosive delivered by model car. The alleged ring-leader communicated with an al-Qaida handler in Pakistan, whereas the second-in-command appears to have been in charge of preparing recruits for jihadi training abroad, spending six weeks in Pakistan to train himself.¹²¹ The plotters were in possession of several al-Qaida training manuals, including AQAP's Inspire Magazine promoting simple "do-it-yourself"-attacks.¹²² The contact in Pakistan does not appear to have instructed the cell in connection with the UK attack plot, however.¹²³

2012 EDL plot

In June 2012, a gang composed of British-Pakistani and British-Bengali extremists from Birmingham prepared a terrorist attack against a rally organized by the right-wing, anti-Islam extremist organization English Defence League (EDL) in Dewsbury, UK. The group was discovered by coincidence during a routine traffic control, driving from Dewsbury to Birmingham after learning that the EDL rally had ended early. One of their cars contained a number of knives, machetes, swords and a sawn-off shot gun, in addition to an improvised explosive (pipe bomb) made out of fire-works, nails and ball bearings meant to function as shrapnel. The militants admitted intent to attack EDL on the grounds that the organization had insulted the Prophet Mohammed, and they received up to nineteen years, five-year sentences each.¹²⁴ They drew inspiration and advice from AQAP's Inspire magazine.¹²⁵

2012 Wootton Bassett plot (C2)

In July 2012, UK authorities disrupted a plot by the jihadi convert Richard Dart (twenty-nine) and two accomplices, Imran Mahmood and Jahangor Alom, to kill UK intelligence officials in Royal Wootton Bassett, including heads of MI5 and MI6.¹²⁶ Mahmood and Jahangor had received training in Pakistan over a two-year period and tried to recruit others to Pakistan training camps. Dart's radicalization is believed to have begun through his interaction with an Islamist extremist group and website called "Muslims against Crusades".¹²⁷ The plotters were secretive and cautious, communicating in sign-language and codes so as to avoid detection. Investigators retrieved samples of nitroglycerin, RDX and PETN from Mahmood's rucksack.¹²⁸

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2012 Gibraltar plot (C2)

In August 2012, Spanish and French authorities made coordinated arrests of suspected terrorists hailing from Chechnya, Turkey and Dagestan. They were believed to be plotting terrorist attacks in Gibraltar, possibly using paragliders to bomb a shopping center. The suspects were in possession of explosives and suspicious videos. The purported ringleader, a Dagestani, former Russian special soldier, was believed to have connected with al-Qaida and the Uzbek Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) in Waziristan, Pakistan in 2010, and to have taken part in terrorism-related activities internationally, before he was captured.¹²⁹

2012 Cannes-Torcy network's grenade attack on Kosher supermarket (C1)

In September 2012, two jihadis threw a hand grenade into a Jewish bakery in a suburb of Paris. One of them, a former delinquent turned religious, was rounded up and shot dead in an exchange of fire with the police in early October. This man, Jeremie Sidney (thirty-three), had become radicalized in jail and joined a militant network dubbed the "Cannes-Torcy network" by French security officials. The network was involved in recruitment for al-Qaida's wing in the Syrian jihad, Jabhat al-Nusra (JAN), and dissemination of jihadi propaganda. Members of the network later appear to have joined ISIS. From Sidney's home, police investigators retrieved what appeared to be a target list of Jewish associations.¹³⁰

Vague plots

2011 London Boys AQ/Shabaab Olympics (C3)

Between 2011 and 2013, information from press sources and the well-informed Long War Journal blog, suggested that al-Qaida had been plotting terrorist attacks against the 2012 London Olympics, employing a cell dubbed "London Boys", which involved Britons of North African decent and one IT-student hailing from Iran.¹³¹ While the sources are sketchy, the alleged cell is said to have received training by al-Shabaab in Somalia and was being prepared for attacks on schools and hotels in the UK, combining arson with shootings. According to the sources, Osama bin Laden had ordered the attacks, which were to be overseen by al-Shabaab leaders and also involved the wife of London bomber Jermaine Lindsay, "White Widow" Samantha Lewthwaite. In an interview with the Guardian one of the alleged plotters said they had been pressured by Somali and British interrogators to admit to a terrorist plot that never existed¹³²

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2012 Killing of Shia Imam Brussels (C3)

In March 2012, a Shia imam was killed in an arson attack on a mosque in Brussels. A forty-six-year-old father armed with an axe forced himself inside the building, attacked the imam and set fire to the mosque using fuel. Witnesses at the scene said the attacker was a Salafi and claimed he shouted Sunni slogans and cries related to the conflict in Syria on his way out of the mosque. On trial charged with terrorist offences, he claimed the attack was a wake-up-call to Shia Muslims, but I did not find information that the arsonist was connected to organized jihadi networks.¹³³

2012 Copenhagen AK-47s (C3)

In April 2012, three men were arrested in Copenhagen on suspicion of plotting a terrorist attack with Kalashnikovs. The suspects included one twenty-two-year-old Jordanian, a twenty-three-year-old Turk and one twenty-one-year-old Danish national living in Egypt. According to unconfirmed media reports, the arrests came after the suspects had bought two AK-47s from a man who may have been a PET-agent, in a so-called sting operation. Further investigations failed to come up with evidence of a concrete plan to attack targets in Denmark.¹³⁴

2012: Somali brothers Denmark (C2/C3)

In May 2012, two Danish-Somali brothers aged eighteen and twenty-three were arrested in Copenhagen and Aarhus respectively, suspected of plotting a terrorist attack. The older brother had attended a training camp run by al-Shabaab in Somalia from January to February and Danish security services considered it necessary to intervene to avert terrorist acts, although it was not clear from the case what type of attack was being planned, and where it was going to be launched. The PET said the suspects had been discussing weapons, attack methods and targets and that the reason for the arrest was that the security service feared they were plotting an attack in Denmark or abroad.

2013

Well-documented plots

2013 Mohammed Echaabi Spain plot (C2)

In February 2013, the Moroccan Mohammed Echaabi was arrested in Valencia, Spain on suspicion of plotting a global jihad-inspired attack on pub-

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lic figures, or other targets in Spain or other European countries.¹³⁵ Some reports indicated that a high-ranking Arab official was one of the intended targets.¹³⁶ The suspect had attempted to obtain explosives and firearms, and Spanish officials underscored how his profile resembled that of Mohammed Merah, the man behind murders of French soldiers and Jewish children in Southern France in 2012.¹³⁷ Echaabi had tried, but failed to enter Gaza via Egypt, with a view to launching an attack on Israeli interests. He had also tried to enter Morocco with intention of carrying out an attack, according to media reports.¹³⁸ Echaabi has not been tied to specified terrorist networks, but has rather been described as an al-Qaida-inspired “Lone Wolf”, who appears to have radicalized and educated himself online.

2013 Lars Hedegaard attack (C1)

In February 2013, an individual dressed as a mailman approached the home of former journalist and a fiercely outspoken Islam-critic Lars Hedegaard in Copenhagen, and attempted to kill him with a handgun.¹³⁹ The attacker fired one shot that missed Hedegaard’s head, after which the gun malfunctioned in an attempt to fire another. The attacker then fled the scene. Investigations showed that the attack was pre-planned, and a car he had rented was placed outside Hedegaard’s two weeks before the attack, likely to conduct reconnaissance. Hedegaard has been a highly controversial figure in Danish public debate and even went to trial on racism charges based on his harsh Islam critique. However, he was freed from the charges by the Danish High Court. The suspected attacker was a twenty-six-year-old Danish-Palestinian (addressed as BH) with ties to extremists in Denmark (for example people involved in the Glostrup cell disrupted in 2005).¹⁴⁰ There are indications that he spent time in Lebanon in the time before the attack (he told a friend he had married in Lebanon one month before the shooting).¹⁴¹ After fleeing the scene of the attack he travelled to Lebanon. From there he appears to have traveled in and out of Syria via Turkey, where he is suspected of having joined the insurgency.¹⁴² It is not known which group he was affiliated with, but he was arrested in Turkey on his way to Denmark again on 14 April 2014. It was later rumored that he had been released from jail in exchange for Turkish ISIS prisoners.¹⁴³

2013 Marignane plot (C2)

In March 2013, two suspected jihadi terrorists were detained in the South of France city of Marignane near Marseilles, because it was believed that they

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were plotting a terrorist bomb attack on French soil.¹⁴⁴ Police said they uncovered a makeshift bomb laboratory in the house of one of those arrested. Government officials told reporters they believed the attack was supposed to be a tribute to Mohammed Merah. The arrestees had made tributes to Mohammed Merah on Facebook, and automatic weapons and explosives were seized in the counter-terrorism operation. One of them tried to go to Tunisia to meet up with an AQIM-leader, but was arrested at the airport in France.¹⁴⁵ The explosive included fifty grams of TATP, 4.5 kilograms of nitrate-fuel mixture, 68 kilograms of nitrate and two liters of acetone which would enable the production of 600 grams or more of TATP.¹⁴⁶

2013 Bonn plot (C2)

In March 2013, German authorities arrested four extreme Salafis suspected of plotting to assassinate right-wing politician and leader of the Pro-NRW Party, Markus Beisicht. Police raids were launched against three radical Islamist associations dubbed Dawa FFM, Islamische Audios and An-Nussrah, which all had an online presence and pursued fundraising, recruitment and propaganda on behalf of jihadi movements.¹⁴⁷ Two of the suspects were apprehended while they were driving a car near the politician's residence, and police confiscated one firearm and explosives among their belongings. It later turned out that one of the men had also tried, but failed to bomb Bonn Central Station in December 2012, with a bomb device made out of ammonium nitrate (fertilizer) mixture, which failed to explode.¹⁴⁸

2013 Lee Rigby murder (C1)

On 22 May 2013, two Britons of Nigerian decent, Michael Adebolajo (Mujaahid Abu Hamza) (twenty-eight) and Michael Adebowale (twenty-two), killed a soldier of the British Army, Drummer Lee Rigby near the Royal Artillery Barracks in Woolwich, South-East London. The assailants ran Rigby down with a car before hacking him to death with knives and a meat cleaver, attempting to decapitate the victim while shouting "Allahu Akbar".¹⁴⁹ The killers remained at the murder scene and talked to bystanders while allowing them to film. They said the attack was aimed at the British soldier as revenge for Muslims he had killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Investigation revealed that Adebolajo had been a longstanding member of the UK Islamist scene surrounding al-Muhajiroun spin-offs and Anjem Choudary, and that he had been arrested in Kenya in 2010 on his way to join al-Shabaab in Somalia. When

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police arrived on the scene the jihadis charged against them armed with an old revolver that misfired, and injured the shooter only.¹⁵⁰

2013 Paris stabbing (C2)

On 27 May 2013, only five days after the killing of Drummer Lee Rigby, a convert named Alexandre Dhaussy attacked a French soldier patrolling a train and subway traffic hub in the La Défense financial area of Paris.¹⁵¹ The attacker jumped the guard and stabbed him with a box-cutter in the neck. He was known by security services to have radicalized over the last few years, but I did not find information suggesting he was part of an organized jihadi network.¹⁵² The attack was believed to have been inspired or triggered by the UK soldier attack days before.

2013 France assassination plot (C2)

In June 2013, French security services apprehended six individuals aged between twenty-two and thirty-eight suspected of plotting attacks on public figures in France.¹⁵³ Four of the suspects held French citizenships whereas one hailed from Benin and another from Comoros. One public prosecutor told the press that the plotters represented the most serious terrorist threat in France since the attacks by the GIA in the 1990s. Those arrested were known to previously have been involved in armed robberies.

2013 Lyes Darani plot (C2)

In October 2013, French police arrested a terrorist suspect named Lyes Darani in Lille.¹⁵⁴ He was in the possession of a bomb manual and a martyrdom testament, and had returned to France from Syria via Lebanon. According to media reports he had first been involved in a plot to attack Shia Muslims in Lebanon, before he returned to France and scouted targets for a suicide mission. A similar pattern was later seen in the case of French-Tunisian Mohamed Ouharani who plotted an attack in France on ISIS's behalf in the summer of 2014.¹⁵⁵

2013 London "Mumbai" plot (C2)

In October 2013, British MI5 intercepted four individuals believed to be plotting a Mumbai-style terrorist attack in central London. The alleged plotters were young Britons hailing from Turkey, Algeria, Azerbaijan and Pakistan. Apparently, they had actively been trying to obtain weapons suitable for a

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guerilla-style “Mumbai” attack. Two suspects were released, but one Turkish-Briton and Algerian-Briton were charged with terrorist offences. Reportedly, they had ties to (ISIS) and had spent time with the group in Syria.¹⁵⁶ There had also been contacts between them and an alleged handler named “Ahmed” on the Syrian-Turkish border, upon return to Britain.¹⁵⁷ Prosecutors believed that the purported cell-leader Erol I. was plotting indiscriminate mass casualty attacks on civilians with bombs and Kalashnikovs and also considered assassinating Tony Blair and security officials.¹⁵⁸ The evidence did not hold up in court and he was cleared of the charges. The case illustrates the difficulty of assessing plots. The security services assessed the plot to be very real and dangerous, and probably still do, whereas in the legal sense no planned attack.

Vague plots

2013 UK prison hostage taking (C3)

In May 2013, a counter-terrorism investigation was launched into a hostage-taking incident inside a UK maximum security prison. According to media reports inmates took one prison guard hostage and threatened to kill him unless demands were met. The demands were not specified in the sources, but were said to be related to Islamist extremism. Specially trained prison staff managed to free the hostage who had only suffered minor injuries after having been beaten. There were concerns that the hostage-taking might have been inspired by the killing of a British soldier in Woolwich shortly before.

2013 Sharia4Italy plot (C3)

In June 2013, Italian police arrested the head of the Sharia4Italy network, Moroccan Anas El A., on suspicions that he was plotting a terrorist attack.¹⁵⁹ He had applauded the murder of the British soldier in Woolwich, UK and the stabbing of a French soldier in Paris in emails to other members of the Sharia4 network internationally. He had also been scouting potential targets such as the central train station and military barracks in Brescia, Italy, via Google Maps. According to press reports he had previously announced his hatred of the West and Jews because he had been harassed after the 9/11 attacks and expressed wishes to become a martyr. Reportedly, he had also distributed training and explosives manuals online and shown an interest in launching attack in other parts of Italy and France. Moreover, he was involved in supporting activism and recruitment for the insurgency in Syria and had

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expressed admiration for Mohamed Jarmoun arrested in March 2012 suspected of plans to attack a synagogue in Milan.

2013 Ali M. French bombing plot (C3)

In June 2013, French police arrested a thirty-two-year-old butcher referred to as Ali M., who had communicated with AQIM via mail and tried to board a flight for Tunisia to meet with an AQIM leader. According to media sources he had been discussing bomb attacks against the Eiffel Tower, Louvre, the Avignon Theatre Festival and a nuclear power station as well as markets, night-clubs and bars. Reports said he had specified that shopping centers should not be attacked out of fear of killing fellow Muslims. Ali M. was known to the police as an extremist, but does not appear to have possessed weapons, explosives or other concrete evidence of an attack plan.

2013 Germany model aircraft plot (C3)

In June 2013, German anti-terrorism police raided addresses in Stuttgart, Munich and Danau to intercept an alleged assassination plot by Tunisian Islamist extremists. The police confiscated one or several model aircraft powerful enough to carry explosives in the raid. The operation was prompted by intelligence that Islamists were plotting to use remote control model aircrafts as UAVs to deliver bombs onto unspecified targets. Model planes sufficiently large and powerful enough to carry enough explosives to blow up a building were seized in raids.

2013 Prince Harry assassination plot (C3)

In June 2013, there were media reports of a British Muslim convert who had handed himself into the police admitting plans to assassinate Prince Harry. Mark Townley (thirty) who had taken the name Ashraf al-Islam had done online research into weapons and kidnapping tactics while also surfing jihadi websites. He had also kept track of the Prince's whereabouts. The plan was to disarm an armed police guard during a parade Prince Harry was attending and use it to shoot him. The convert had a sketchy past as a fraudster and porn director and was said to have converted in jail during 2010–2011. In connection with the trial he was subjected to a psychiatric evaluation that concluded he suffered from personality disorder. The judge characterized the plot as vague and unlikely to succeed, but maintained the convert posed a danger and had him sentenced.

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2014

Well-documented plots

2014 Riviera plot (C1)

In February 2014, French police arrested a twenty-three-year-old terrorist suspect, Ibrahim Boudina, in the Cote d'Azur region in Nice, South France. He was believed to have trained with ISIS in Syria and possessed 900 grams of the explosive TATP and a handgun. He allegedly plotted a terrorist bomb attack against the Nice Carnival. According to media he had put together a rudimentary IED, which included bolts and nails meant as shrapnel. It is thought that the plot was supposed to resemble the Boston Marathon bombings. The suspect joined the insurgency in Syria alongside jihadi outfits in September 2012 and returned in early 2014. He was known to have ties to the Cannes-Torcy network, which was involved in recruitment for Jabhat al-Nusra (JAN), and whose members carried out an attack with a hand grenade on a Jewish bakery in the Paris region in September 2012. Members of this network later joined ISIS apparently. The attack led to a major crackdown against the network which was dismantled by French security services.¹⁶⁰

2014 Brussels Museum shooting (C1)

On 24 May 2014, a French-Algerian jihadi who had trained with ISIS in Syria entered the Jewish Museum in Brussels and opened fire at visitors and staff with a Kalashnikov. The attack left four people dead, three at the scene and one in hospital. The attacker disguised himself, and managed to escape. He wore a sports camera strapped to his chest to film the atrocity, but it is unsure if he managed to get it on tape. The terrorist was arrested six days later at a railway station in Marseilles. His was carrying the assault weapon with him wrapped in famous black flag of ISIS. It later transpired that he had spent one year in Syria with ISIS after becoming radicalized while he served a jail sentence in France. In Syria he had been part of a crew of hostage takers said to be behind the abduction, heinous torture and beheadings of Syrian and foreign hostages, including journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff.¹⁶¹

2014 UK possible Khorasan plot (C2)

In June 2014, media reports said UK police had detained a British jihadi who had fought in Syria and was suspected of plotting a major terrorist attack, perhaps on the scale of the 7 July London bombings, after returning home.

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The attack was likely meant to involve guns and bombs, and it was believed that the suspect took orders from a shadowy al-Qaida figure in Syria. The contact in Syria was reportedly known to design plots directed against Western countries and was making contacts with would-be-terrorists in the UK and other European countries for this purpose. The UK suspect was said to have brought with him substantial amounts of cash, and used them to buy weapons and bomb-making materials. Reportedly he kept in touch with the contact in Syria after returning to the UK, and he also teamed up with another extremist accomplice before the security services intervened.¹⁶²

2014 Creteil plot (C2)

In July 2014, there were media reports that a twenty-year-old French-Tunisian, Mohamed Ouharani, had been arrested shortly after returning from Syria via Lebanon. He was believed to have trained with ISIS and of plotting shooting attacks in Paris or Creteil, inspired by Mohammed Merah and Mehdi Nemmouche. According to media sources he and one French accomplice had offered themselves up to commit suicide attacks on Shias in Lebanon at first, but ended up returning to France. Also, Ouharani reportedly notified ISIS-contacts in Syria that he was ready to act.¹⁶³ The case had striking similarities to the Lyes Darani plot, intercepted in October 2013.¹⁶⁴

2014 Ziamani beheading plot (C2)

In August 2014, UK police and MI5 apprehended nineteen-year-old Bruthom Ziamani for plotting to behead a British soldier with a knife. Of Congolese Christian background, Ziamani was inspired by the Woolwich attack and was in possession of a hammer, a knife and an Islamic flag when he was arrested. He had also made surveillance of Army cadet bases and spoken to his girlfriend of his intent to murder soldiers. The youngster had converted only four months before the arrest and he had been radicalized swiftly. He had mixed with followers of Anjem Choudary after converting. Al-Muhajiroun activists took care of him after he ran away from home. Alarmingly, he had been subject to counter-radicalization efforts (PREVENT), without positive effects apparently.¹⁶⁵

2014 Surgeon plot (C2)

In October 2014, UK police arrested four suspected jihadi terrorists with links to IS suspected of plotting terrorist attacks. The main suspect was a

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medical student named Tarik Hassan (also known as “the surgeon”). He had been studying in Sudan and it was believed that he also spent time in Syria making plans with IS. According to some media reports the plan may have involved a beheading inspired by IS’ atrocities in Syria. Another suspect was of Moroccan and Saudi origin and excelled in school before he began mixing with North African extremists and became radicalized. He was highly active on voicing extreme views and eulogizing friends who had died fighting in Syria. Ironically, the pair was watching the American TV series “Homeland” when they were arrested. Statements from the authorities indicated that the arrests were part of an interventionist strategy to prevent attack plans from developing.¹⁶⁶

2014 Remembrance Day plot (C2)

In November 2014, UK police arrested four jihadis suspected of plotting a terrorist attack during Remembrance Day.¹⁶⁷ One of those apprehended, nineteen-year-old named Yousaf Syed, had gone through a swift radicalization phase and had spent time in Pakistan.¹⁶⁸ Syed had been experiencing personal problems, such as the divorce of his parents, and he had reportedly been threatened and intimidated by people after becoming an Islamist. The plot had no direct link to Syria, but two affiliates of those arrested, Omar Hussain and Shabazz Suleman, had gone to Syria in early 2014 and joined ISIS.¹⁶⁹ The most likely target appears to have been military personnel, their families and officials or a public figure attending the commemoration of fallen British soldiers. Sources indicated that the plans involved guns rather than bombs, although details were sketchy.¹⁷⁰ Some sources indicated that the plotters also had thought about kidnapping a random member of the public and decapitating him or her.¹⁷¹

2014 Vienna teenager bombing plot (C2)

In October 2014, a fourteen-year-old Turkish boy referred to as Mertkan G. was arrested in Austria on suspicion of plotting to bomb a train at Vienna’s Westbahnhof and other crowded areas in the city, before fleeing to Syria and joining IS. He had been living in Austria for eight years and he had conducted online research on how to build improvised cluster-bombs like the ones used in the Boston Marathon attack. He had also voiced support for IS on social media. According to some media reports, the Turkish boy had been offered the equivalent of USD 25,000 and a special position within the IS if he exe-

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cuted the attacks. The offer was made online and the reports said two other boys at large had received similar offers. The fourteen-year-old had not yet built bomb devices, but had carried out reconnaissance at the time of the arrest. Other media reports referred to the boy as a lone wolf, without any jihadi contacts. The plot could perhaps be perceived as an initiation test to prove commitment.¹⁷²

2014 Tours knife attack (C2)

In December 2014, in Tours, France, a man charged into a police station armed with a knife and attacked three police officers before he was shot dead at the scene. Police tried to overpower the man when he first entered. He stabbed a policewoman in the face and tried to stab two other officers while shouting “Allahu Akbar”.¹⁷³ The attacker was a former rapper and convert to Islam from Burundi origin. He was known to have become a radical Islamist. However, he was not on the watch lists of the security services, according to media sources.¹⁷⁴ The assailant made the IS’s black flag his profile picture on Facebook a couple of days before the incident. There were indications in the case that he had suffered from psychological problems as well.

Vague plots

2014 Gard and Vaucluse plot (C3)

In June 2014, French authorities arrested two men and two women in the Gard and Vaucluse regions, who had spent time in Syria, on the suspicion that they were planning unspecified terrorist acts.¹⁷⁵

2014 French teenage girls synagogue plot (C3)

In August 2014, two French teenage girls aged fifteen and seventeen were arrested over an alleged plot to commit a suicide attack on a synagogue in Lyon. According to media accounts the arrests came after the girls discussed an attack on social media. The girls had only been in touch online, but one of them was linked to known extremists and had been put under surveillance.¹⁷⁶ It was not exactly clear if the girls had connections to organized terrorists, but they were part of a broader network of sympathizers of foreign jihadis, ISIS in particular.

2014 Cyprus threat (C3)

In August 2014, there were media reports about the arrest of one French national (thirty) and one Senegalese (twenty-seven) in the southern Cyprus

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city of Limassol. The two had made threats to bomb mosques in Cyprus during a visit to a mosque, and was taken seriously because one of them, a Frenchman of Congolese decent, was known to have ties to IS.¹⁷⁷

2014 Brussels EU targets plot (C3)

In August-September 2014, Belgian, Dutch and Turkish police cooperated in a surveillance operation, which led to the arrest of five people (including a married couple). It was believed that they had formed a terrorist cell, had ties to jihadis in Syria, and were plotting an attack in Europe. Some sources indicated a connection to IS, whereas others pointed to al-Qaida's Syrian wing Jabhat al-Nusra (JAN). Most of the suspects were of Turkish origin and they were arrested when security services found out that they had acquired handguns that were kept in an apartment in Belgium. They were also in possession of jihadi propaganda. Initial speculations in the press that the plans involved attacking the EU's offices in Brussels were downplayed by officials.¹⁷⁸

2014 Jewish teenager plot against parents' shop (C3)

In October 2014, The Times of Israel reported that a French Jewish teenager had radicalized after interacting with IS activists online, and the movement's recruitment network in France. Oddly, the girl, who was described as a top student, became so extreme that she planned to conduct a terrorist attack against her parents' shop before traveling to Syria and the Islamic State.¹⁷⁹ It was the girl who contacted French IS-recruiters after radicalizing by herself online, and when the family and a de-radicalization project sought to intervene, the recruiters kept reaching out to the girl.

2014 IS flag and maps of locations in Rome (C3)

In November 2014, Italian police arrested two North African terrorist suspects in possession of IS flags and maps of Rome. The arrests came after weapons were found in an abandoned car used by the suspects when speeding past a traffic control. In an apartment used by the suspects police retrieved a black IS flag and a map of Rome with different locations encircled.¹⁸⁰

2014 Dijon car attack (C3)

In December 2014, a man attacked pedestrians in the city of Dijon, France, by ramming his car into them, while shouting "allahu akbar". Eleven people were

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injured as a result. The forty-year-old assailant had a history of mental illness, but shouted to witnesses that he attacked on behalf of “the children of Palestine”; strongly suggesting political motives were involved.¹⁸¹

2015

Well-documented plots

2015 Charlie Hebdo attack (C1)

On 7 January 2015, two French-Algerian terrorists stormed the localities of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris and killed the editor and several staff. The magazine was known for publishing Mohammed cartoons and the terrorists shouted that they had avenged the Prophet before escaping the scene. They also claimed to be working for AQAP and took a hostage at an industrial site before being killed by anti-terrorism forces two days after the attack on the magazine. AQAP took responsibility for the attack later the same month.¹⁸² One of the brothers was said to have spent time with AQAP in Yemen in 2009–2010 and to have met the “Underwear-bomber” (Abdulmutallab).¹⁸³ Some sources have reported that both brothers trained with AQAP in Yemen during 2011.¹⁸⁴ In a parallel development a French-Malian, Amedy Coulibaly¹⁸⁵, who claimed to act in coordination with the Charlie Hebdo attackers first shot and wounded a jogger and then killed a police woman before taking hostages at a Jewish supermarket on the day the other terrorists had been rounded up. The hostage taker had pledged allegiance to IS¹⁸⁶, but I found no sources confirming that he ever entered Syria. His wife, who may have been an accomplice to the preparation of the attack, escaped France and entered Syria the day after the attack on Charlie Hebdo.¹⁸⁷ She later gave an interview to IS in Dabiq.¹⁸⁸ All of the terrorists belonged to longstanding jihadi support networks in France that had focused on the Iraqi jihad from 2003 onwards. All of them had spent time in jail and had been influenced by Algerian Djamel Beghal who operated as a recruiter for al-Qaida in Europe before he ended up in jail in France, from 2001 onwards.

2015 Verviers plot (C1)

On 15 (16) January 2015, Belgian counter-terrorism police raided the hide-outs of suspected terrorists linked to IS in the town of Verviers to intercept a major attack in the making. Special Forces stormed the militants’ apartment when a suspected ringleader visited and the terrorists fought back with

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Kalashnikovs and grenades. Two of the plotters (Sofiane Amghar and Khalid Ben Larbi) were killed and the alleged leader (Marouane El Bali) captured. Inside the apartment, police confiscated chemicals suitable for production of TATP, police uniforms and GoPro cameras such as those used or sought by Mohammed Merah, Mehdi Nemmouche and the Charlie Hebdo attackers. The plotters had talked about killing police, but investigators believed they also pursued an ambitious plan to bomb a target of high symbolic value.¹⁸⁹ Several of the plotters had trained with IS in Syria and communicated with a Belgian IS-member, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, believed to function as a middleman between them and the IS-leadership.¹⁹⁰

2015 Copenhagen attack (C1)

In February 2015, Danish-Moroccan Omar Abdel Hamid El-Hussein launched a shooting attack against a cultural center named Krudttønden in Østerbro, Copenhagen, where the Swedish artist Lars Vilks was attending a debate on freedom of speech. Some forty shots were fired with an automatic rifle, injuring four participants, and killing one filmmaker attending. The terrorist escaped and managed to execute a second attack at a synagogue in Krystalgade near the Nørreport metro station, where he killed a security guard watching over a bar mitzvah celebration, and injured two police officers. Shortly thereafter, the gunman was shot dead by armed police. El-Hussein was a conflicted individual who managed well in school, but drifted into gang crime. Like so many other terrorists he had radicalized inside jail, where he shared cell with a known Islamist extremist and IS-sympathizer.¹⁹¹ El-Hussein swore allegiance to IS via Facebook a short time before he staged the shootings.¹⁹²

2015 Ceuta plot (C2)

On 10 March 2015, Spanish authorities announced the arrest of two militant Islamists who were plotting attacks inside Spain or in neighboring countries.¹⁹³ The plotters were Spaniards of Moroccan origin and were arrested in the North African Spanish enclave of Ceuta. They had been in contact with IS online, and had been arrested on another occasion possessing guns, munitions, knives, military uniforms and Spanish license plates. Officials also mentioned to the media that those arrested had profiles resembling the terrorists behind the attacks on Charlie Hebdo and the Jewish supermarket in Paris, January 2015.

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2015 Catalonia plot (C2)

In April 2015, Spanish police jailed seven Islamists suspected of having IS-links and plotting “kidnappings, an execution and attacks on Jewish shops and buildings in Spain”.¹⁹⁴ The suspects belonged to a local network dubbed “The Islamic Brotherhood for Preaching Jihad”, involved in recruiting Spaniards for IS in Syria. Members of the group had reportedly considered kidnapping individuals, dressing them in orange jump suits and beheading them in an IS-style video broadcast, investigators believed. They had also contemplated the kidnapping of a female bank director for ransom.¹⁹⁵ The cell involved Moroccans and Spaniards mainly and the leader had reportedly proposed attacks with guns and hand grenades on a range of targets including a Jewish bookshop, synagogues, police and other targets.¹⁹⁶

2015 Ghlam church bomb plot (C2)

In April 2015, French police apprehended a twenty-four-year-old of Algerian origin believed to be plotting terrorist attacks against churches in Paris. The suspect was known to the security services for wanting to join the insurgency in Syria and was arrested after he accidentally shot himself in the leg, perhaps while preparing an attack. From the French-Algerian’s car and his apartment, investigators retrieved weapons, munitions, bullet proof vests, notes on alternative targets and “documents linked to al-Qaida and Islamic State”.¹⁹⁷ The purported plotter was a computer science student and he was also suspected of having shot and killed a woman during an attempted car jack just before his arrest. The suspect, identified as Sid Ahmed Ghlam, was under surveillance and had been in contact with an unidentified individual in Syria who had specifically asked him to target a church. He surrounded himself with people known to have embraced radical Islam, but his extremist contacts and activities had not been assessed serious enough to intervene until April.¹⁹⁸ Shortly after, police apprehended three additional suspects linked to the plotter.¹⁹⁹

2015 Germany bike race plot (C2)

In May 2015, German police arrested a German-Turk and his wife suspected of preparing a terrorist attack. The incident caused the cancellation of a bike race from Eschborn to Frankfurt out of concern it might have been a target. From the suspects’ home near Frankfurt, investigators retrieved a functional pipe bomb, three liters of hydrogen peroxide, munitions and parts of a G3 assault rifle. The German-Turk had known links to the so-called Sauerland

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network, which has been implicated in several jihadi plots Germany.²⁰⁰ The Sauerland network established ties to the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), and Uzbek terrorist outfit operating out of the Af-Pak border region, which plotted a high-profile attack in Germany in 2007.²⁰¹ Individuals and cliques associated with the Sauerland network also seem to have maintained relations with al-Qaida on occasions.²⁰²

2015 Lyon gas factory attack (C1)

In June 2015, a radical Islamist with IS-sympathies mounted a terrorist attack against a US owned gas plant outside Lyon. The attacker, Yassine Salhi, was working as a truck driver with the company. He attempted to cause gas explosions inside the plant by ramming his car into gas cylinders and he also killed his boss, severed his head and put it on a fence pole, even taking a selfie with it to distribute online. The pictures were sent to a friend of his in Syria.²⁰³ Salhi had lured his boss into his car at a nearby location before driving to the plant. Inside, he had knocked him unconscious and strangled him before conducting the decapitation and entering the premises of the gas facility. His lawyer claimed Salhi was pursuing personal grievances after being reprimanded by the boss, but his background, contacts and the modus operandi suggested otherwise. Salhi was known to frequent extremist circles since 2003; the friend in Syria he sent pictures to, Sebastian Younes, had indicated that he had been in contact with the IS-leadership about the pictures; Salhi brought black flags with the Islamic confession of faith during the attack and shouted the jihadi slogan “allahu akbar” when he was arrested.²⁰⁴

2015 Plot against French military base by IS-sympathizer (C2)

In July 2015, news broke of an intercepted plan to attack a French military base, by three young Islamists receiving directives from an IS member in Syria. The youngest suspect, a seventeen-year-old Ismael K., received instruction to attack after not being able to leave France to join the group because he had come under surveillance.²⁰⁵ The plans allegedly involved the kidnapping of a senior officer at the base and beheading him on film using GoPro camera according to French officials.²⁰⁶ The men had connected with each other via social media and communicated amongst them and with a contact in Syria using encrypted messaging. A twenty-three-year-old member of the cell, Djebriil A., had previously served at the base and possessed insider-knowledge of the limited security in and around New Year. Investigators believed they

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planned to employ handguns in the attacks. The plotters had no criminal record, some level of education and the watching of IS-videos was believed to have played a significant role in their radicalization.

2015 Amsterdam-Paris high-speed train shooting (C1)

In August 2015, a twenty-six-year-old Moroccan, Ayoub El-Khazzani attempted to launch a killing spree with a Kalashnikov onboard a high-speed train between Amsterdam and Paris. The attack failed because the gunman was overpowered by vigilant passengers. Only one of the passengers suffered gun wounds, when wrestling the terrorist's rifle from him. El-Khazzani was known to European security services as a potential terrorist threat. He had spent time in Turkey and Syria in 2014–15 and was believed to have fought with IS. According to some reports he had also been in touch with the AQAP-directed Kouachi brothers before the attacks on Charlie Hebdo.²⁰⁷ He had lived in Spain in 2007–14 where he had mixed with radicals and also been arrested on drug trafficking charges on occasion, but released. Sources indicated he had been linked to jihadi networks in Spain and Belgium, although allegations have not been confirmed via official channels when writing (September 2015).

Vague plots

2015 Belgian raid on Chechen terrorist suspects (C3)

In June 2015, Belgian police apprehended sixteen suspected Chechen jihadis in different parts of the country. Some of the suspects were said to be linked to Jabhat al-Nusra, whereas others were believed to have ties to the Caucasus Emirate. Some of those arrested had spent time in Syria and received jihadi training.²⁰⁸ The suspects operated in separate groups, and one based in the city of Louvain was believed to plot an attack inside Belgium.

2015 UK Armed Forces Day plot (C3)

In June 2015, UK media reported that a known IS-linked militant referred to as Junaid Hussain al-Britani had trained an undercover journalist from a British tabloid, posing as an extremist, to carry out an attack with pressure cooker bombs on the Armed Forces Day parade.²⁰⁹ Hussain had been operating as a hacker on behalf of IS according to media reports.

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2015 French concert hall plot (C3)

In August 2015, French authorities arrested a Syria-returnee suspected of planning attacks on a concert hall in France or another European country.²¹⁰ The alleged plotter had no criminal record and had not featured investigations of extremist milieus. Reportedly, the individual had received training by IS, during which he was injured. He was said to have been encouraged by the group to return to Europe and commit an attack and he himself had wanted to launch an attack in France against the concert hall. The plot appears to have been intercepted at an early phase and while the arrestee had admitted to plotting, no arms or reconnaissance material was found among his belongings.

2015 Danish teenager stabbing (C3)

In September 2015, media reports said a Danish teenage girl who murdered her mother with a knife was believed to have been inspired by IS-videos. The girl, aged fifteen, had radicalized after a love affair with a Muslim man. When he dumped her and moved to Sweden she coupled with an Iraqi-born refugee, twenty-nine-year-old Bakhtiar Mohammed Abdulla, believed to have participated in the killing. The pair reportedly consumed brutal IS beheading videos before stabbing to death her mother with a kitchen knife. It was believed that they had planned to depart for Syria to join IS. Both of them were sentenced and imprisoned.²¹¹

NOTES

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