A Close-Up on ISIS

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What is ISIS?

- Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is an extremist Islamic organization based primarily in northern Syria and Iraq.
- Another name for ISIS is ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant)

- This group has been given the title of “terrorist organization” by the United Nations, European Union, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and many others.
A Brief History
Where is ISIS located?
Foundation and Leadership

- ISIS split from Al Qaeda
  - Al Qaeda refrains from supporting ISIS and even calls them “too extreme” for their own interests.

- Current leader: Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi
  - Under his leadership, ISIS experienced most of its expansion.
  - Organizes large scale operations, including suicide attacks and car bombings.
  - Considers himself as a religious leader and follows Sharia law.
  - According to U.S. Dept. of Defense, he was held in Camp Bucca along with other future leaders of ISIS.
Members

- Members primarily come from the Middle East, but there are members from other nations, most notably Western nations, that join ISIS as well.
  - According the June 2014 edition of The Economist, ISIS has 6000 fighters in Iraq and around 3000-5000 fighters in Syria. About 3000 of these fighters come from abroad (500 fighters from European nations such as France and England).
- Why is having foreign fighters significant for us?

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RxgLvJLCZM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RxgLvJLCZM)

- Other terrorist organizations team up with ISIS
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA7WyupD7Q0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA7WyupD7Q0)
  - Why should we care about other terrorist organizations using ISIS as a ground for expansion?
Ideology

- Sunni vs. Shia
  - Back to the “pure” version of Islam practiced by the Ottoman Empire (before it was taken over by European influences)

- Nation without a state
  - Goal to create separate state for Sunnis in Iraq and Syria
  - Reach as many people as possible

- Does ISIS use religion as a tool to further its own aims?
Power Base and Organization

- Syria oil reserve
  - Al-Omar

- Sources of Recruitment
  - Social Media Outreach
    - Why would people even want to join?
    - Why is using social media an intelligent tactic for ISIS?
International Response to ISIS

- President Obama calls for firm stance against ISIS
- ISIS threat to primarily focus in Syria, Iraq, and Jordan (refugees in flock to Jordan)
  - Is ISIS a threat to US domestic affairs?
- Why should we care?