On the eve of the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, Brazilian and international authorities are working overtime on necessary countermeasures against a potential terrorist attack. Over the last month, more than a dozen Islamic extremists with ties to ISIS have been arrested in Brazil, and at least three separate terror plots have been thwarted. Those who think these Islamist networks in Brazil grew overnight, think again.

> The emergence of Islamic extremism in South America's largest country is well documented. While authorities are now trying to clamp down on these networks ahead of the Olympic Games — the hope is it won't be too little, too late. – Joseph Humire, Chris Grau

Brazil has been a hotbed for radical Islam in Latin America for at least the last three decades. In 2013, one Brazilian official declared: *"without anyone noticing, a generation of Islamic extremists is emerging in Brazil."* Those words proved prophetic for Brazilian authorities now facing the real possibility of an Islamic terrorist attack in Rio 2016. For years, Brazilian policymakers were in denial of the emerging threat. Many believed that as long as they were a hub for Islamic terror groups they would not become a target. The 2016 Olympics has changed that calculus when Brazilian lawmakers finally passed the first anti-terrorism legislation this past March. Brazil's Justice Minister, Alexandre de Moraes, credited the new law as the catalyst for the recent arrests of alleged ISIS-affiliated operatives ahead of the games. The question remains, is this the new normal in Brazil or more of the same? The growth of Radical Islam in Brazil traces back to at least the mid-90s when Iranian and Hezbollah operatives in Foz do Iguaçu provided material support to the largest Islamic terrorist acts in Latin America — the 1992 suicide attack on the Israeli embassy and 1994 AMIA bombing in Buenos Aires, Argentina, collectively killing 114 civilians and injuring hundreds more. Foz do Iguaçu is one of the cities at the crossroads of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay, known infamously as the Tri-Border Area (TBA). The TBA is a hotbed for Islamic terror networks, namely the Lebanese Shi'a group Hezbollah, as well as the militant Sunni Al Qaeda. In 1995, Brazilian authorities detected 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) in Foz do Iguaçu. Three years later, in 1998, KSM returned to the TBA with Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden. Today, Brazilian Federal Police have identified at least seven major Islamic terrorist groups operating in the country. Some of which, like Hezbollah and ISIS, are at war with one another. In Brazil, however, far away from their homeland, there is more cooperation than conflict among these groups. For instance, Egyptian radical Khaled Taki Eldyn, a leader of a Sunni Mosque in Saõ Paulo, is also known to frequent the Shi'a communities in that city. Sheikh Eldyn is believed to have facilitated the visit of KSM and Bin Laden in the 1990s while raising money and providing financial

support to Hassan Nasrallah's Hezbollah. In Brazil, Sunni-Shi'a sects are not as mutually hostile as they are in the Middle East. This becomes increasingly important when considering the case of former GTMO detainee, Jihad Ahmed Mustafa Diyab. Born in Lebanon to a Syrian father and Argentine mother, Diyab was captured by Pakistani police in 2002 and subsequently transferred to GTMO to provide information on Al Qaeda's logistical activities. According to a classified DoD detainee assessment of Diyab, he was a member of the Global Jihad Support Network and specialized in document forgery. The Diyab case sheds light on the cooperation between Al Qaeda and Iran. In December 2014, Diyab was released from GTMO and relocated to Uruguay as part of the White House strategy to close the detention camp in Cuba. Once in Uruguay, Diyab wasted little time in reconnecting with Lebanese relatives in Argentina and then tried to cross the border into Brazil. By June 2016, Brazilian authorities were on the lookout for Diyab who apparently went missing.
He resurfaced on July 27th in the one South American country known to provide a safe haven and logistical support to Islamic terrorists: Venezuela. Diyab's history with Al Qaeda, training in Iran, relatives in Argentina, and connections in Venezuela — could prove disastrous for Brazil. The emergence of Islamic extremism in South America's largest country is well documented. While authorities are now trying to clamp down on these networks ahead of the Olympic Games — the hope is it won't be too little, too late. With half a million tourists and more than 10,000 top athletes from 206 nations, the world is watching Brazil take center stage for the most-viewed sporting event on earth. Unfortunately, as the clock ticks down to the opening ceremony in Rio de Janeiro, another competition is underway. One far darker than the Olympic Games, where the winner receives the misguided promise of martyrdom, not a gold medal. This article was co-authored by Joseph Humire and Chris Grau, who used to work as a researcher for SFS. Read the original, from Fox News, here.