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On Terrorism and Rio 2016 Olympic Games



The Agência Brasileira de Inteligência (ABIN) is worried about the possibility of a “lone wolf” Islamic terrorist attack during the August 5 – 21, 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Brazil.

The attacks carried out in France and Belgium in 2015 and 2016, heightened the concerns of the Brazilian intelligence agency over the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and semi-automatic firearms to conduct attacks in high-density population areas. Additionally, authorities have detected an increase in support within Brazil for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). *Twitter* has served as a critical outreach tool for ISIS, and on at least one occasion has been a sounding board in naming Brazil as its next target. Over the last few months, Brazilian authorities have arrested dozens of ISIS sympathizers and supporters engaged in at least three separate terrorist plots ahead of the Olympic Games.

This Situation Report (SITREP) provides reports, articles, and testimony from scholars, senior fellows, and international fellows of the Center for a Secure Free Society (SFS), as well as information from top Brazilian and international news outlets, analyzing the potential for an Islamic terrorist attack during Rio 2016.



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- A classified Brazilian intelligence (ABIN) report was leaked to the press this past April addressing a potential "lone wolf" Islamic terrorist attack in Rio this year. The report compares the previous attacks in Paris and Brussels to the possibility of similar attacks in Brazil. Segmenting the threat into three categories, the report assigns a Threat Level Designation of 4 out of 5 for the possibility of an attack from what are termed Anti-Systemic Groups.
- A translated excerpt from the ABIN report reads: *"The spread of radical Salafist ideology among Brazilians, combined with operational and legal limitations on monitoring suspects, and the difficulty presented in neutralizing attacks in their infancy all point to an unprecedented increase of a threat in Brazil of terrorist attacks occurring in 2016, especially in the lead-up to the Olympic Games in Rio."*



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JOGOS OLÍMPICOS E PARALÍMPICOS RIO 2016



Part of the official Brazilian intelligence (ABIN) report addressing security concerns ahead of Rio 2016 can be read [here in Portuguese](#) and a general translation can be read [here in English](#).

For the Olympic period, more than 110 intelligence agencies will be installed in Rio de Janeiro. Brazil's Olympic security plan includes 85,000 security personnel, consisting of 47,000 police officers and 38,000 military service members.



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A Counterterrorism Challenge



Brazilian Justice Minister Alexandre de Moraes held a press conference on July 21, 2016 after authorities arrested 10 Brazilians on suspicion of being linked to ISIS and planning terrorist acts during the Olympic Games. Last week, officials arrested the remaining two suspects. These arrests, heralded as a success, are the first high-profile use of Brazil's new anti-terrorism law passed earlier this year. Moraes attributed this new law as an important tool empowering Brazilian authorities to coordinate effectively across nine Brazilian states. The law encourages the use of close to 130 members of Brazil's Federal Police supported by ABIN and other international intelligence agencies in what is known as Operation Hashtag.

- Brazil's new anti-terrorism law – [Law No. 13,260](#) – signed into effect on March 16, 2016, to regulate section XLIII of article 5 of the Constitution, establishes the new terms for defining terrorism, disciplining individuals planning to conduct attacks, and sets legal consequences for terrorist recruitment, training, and finance.
- SFS Executive Director, **Joseph Humire**, addressed the need for anti-terrorism legislation in Brazil back in 2013 and warned of a potential attack during Rio 2016 if this legal vacuum was not addressed. Read more: [Antiterrorism in Brazil: A Dangerous Vacuum](#), *American Foreign Policy Council*, Defense Dossier Issue 9 (pg. 14), December 2013.



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Appropriate anti-terrorism laws are an initial step in addressing the counterterrorism concerns for the Olympic games. Brazil's porous borders, weak institutions, and recent influx of Syrian refugees, however, present additional challenges in neutralizing a potential Islamic terrorist attack in the country. Due to these conditions, over the years, Brazil has become a hub for Islamic terrorism in South America. Al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, and more recently ISIS, are just some of the world's most notorious Islamic terrorist groups that have strategically positioned themselves within Brazil's borders. This challenge is compounded by high levels of public corruption and organized crime catalyzing a growing nexus of criminal and terrorist networks facilitating arms trafficking, terror finance, and immigration fraud. The movement of hundreds of Islamic radicals throughout the country has increased in recent years. These dire conditions create a significant counterterrorism challenge ahead of Rio 2016.

- Earlier this year, the Brazilian government entered into talks with Germany, the European Union, and the UN to discuss taking in more [Syrian refugees](#).
- Following the suspension of Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, undergoing an impeachment trial, [the new government has decided to abandon these talks citing security concerns](#).
- Late last year, Brazilian Federal Police uncovered a criminal ring in Rio de Janeiro providing falsified birth certificates to [72 Syrian nationals in Brazil](#) from 2012 through 2014, among them former members of the Syrian military.
- Meanwhile, [suspicion of ISIS sympathizers in Brazil](#) is increasing. As the number of sympathizers rises, the incentives to plan terrorist attacks targeting the Rio Olympics grow stronger among ISIS operatives.

BORDER CHALLENGE

Brazil's border, more than five times the length of the US-Mexico border, lines 10 of the 12 countries in South America, totaling 16,145 km (*CIA Fact Book*). The size and lack of controls along Brazil's porous border presents real possibilities of cross-border illegal migration by Islamic terrorists into the country.

REFUGEE CHALLENGE

Fewer than half of Syrians seeking asylum in the EU manage to obtain refugee status. In contrast, Brazil has close to 100% eligibility rate and speedy recognition of refugee status made possible by a resolution passed on September 20, 2013. As of March 2016, [Brazil has agreed](#) to grant 8,474 Syrian refugees with humanitarian visas and has already granted 2,250 Syrians full asylum.



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The Growth of Radical Islam in Brazil

In 2013, a Brazilian official declared: *"without anyone noticing, a generation of Islamic extremists is emerging in Brazil."* This strong statement was coupled with increasing concern over the steady growth of Islamist infiltration throughout the country. Historically, the Tri-Border Area (TBA) at the crossroads of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay has been a hotbed for Islamic extremists; this has expanded further north to many of Brazil's major cities.

Both Osama Bin Laden and 9/11 mastermind Khaled Sheik Mohammad reportedly visited the TBA in the mid-1990s and al-Qaeda subsequently entrenched themselves in Brazil. The Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah has a longer history in the country, dating back to the 1980s. Hezbollah has long been implicated in Latin America's largest Islamic terrorist attack against the AMIA Jewish cultural center in 1994 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Much of the logistical support for this bombing in Buenos Aires came from Brazil. Today, there are a variety of Islamic extremists, from radical Shi'a to Salafist groups, proselytizing, recruiting, financing, and potentially plotting a terrorist attack in Brazil.

- SFS Executive Director **Joseph Humire** details the growth of Islam in Brazil, dating back to the founding of the Federative Republic, and describes the emergence of Islamic extremists from the 1980s onward in the [Brazil chapter of the AFPC World Almanac of Islamism](#), August 23, 2013.
- The leading Brazilian weekly news magazine VEJA has reported extensively on the growth of Islamic extremists within Brazil. [In 2011, reports exposed the influence of Al Qaeda in Brazil](#). That same year, further evidence revealed the presence and activities of [Iran and Hezbollah](#).
- More recently, VEJA highlighted the presence of a Saudi extremist, [Sheikh Muhammad Al Arifi](#) – banned from 30 countries in Europe – as a major operative in Brazil. Using social media and modern pop culture, Sheikh Al Arifi's following in Brazil has grown exponentially over the years to include some youth appearing in ISIS propaganda videos.



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ISIS Recruitment and Call to Action



According to SITE Intel Group, a channel called Ansar al-Khilafah on the messaging app *Telegram* pledged allegiance to ISIS. One message reportedly read: *"If the French police cannot stop attacks on its territory, training given to the Brazilian police will not do anything."*

Admiral Kurt Tidd (USN), Commander of U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) highlighted the effectiveness of online recruitment networks in Brazil and Latin America this past June, when warning: *"It's the extremist Islamist movement and that very corrosive engagement that you're seeing on the internet that they've demonstrated an effectiveness in."* This warning comes while ISIS issued a call to arms and action for its sympathizers and followers in Brazil and neighboring countries to join the Jihadi cause.

Issuing its first Spanish communique on May 31, 2016, the Wafa Media Foundation (a pro-ISIS media group) warned that citizens of Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries are among its next potential targets. A month later, on June 3, 2016, an ISIS-linked *Telegram* account named *Online Dawah Operations* called on ISIS supporters with Spanish or Portuguese skills to contact a local militant and join its ranks. In response, an obscure *Telegram* channel in Brazil called Ansar al-Khilafah pledged allegiance to



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ISIS. In the past few months, Brazilian authorities have authenticated numerous online threats from ISIS to attack Rio 2016.

- ISIS call to action in Spanish and Portuguese has turned Brazil into a recruiting ground for [engaging “lone wolf” operatives](#) ahead of Rio 2016. Brazilian intelligence held an internal discussion on handling ISIS recruitment in their country through a report titled: "Islamic State: Reflections for Brazil."
- On November 2015, after the Paris terrorist attacks, Maxime Hauchard, a 23-year-old French national suspected of being an ISIS executioner decapitating Syrian soldiers, sent out a tweet saying: "[Brazil, you are our next target.](#)" Brazilian intelligence authenticated this threat months later.
- ISIS use of Twitter has been particularly effective at reaching out to and recruiting displaced and disaffected Brazilian youth using the Portuguese hashtags: #EstadoIslâmico (Islamic State) and #CalifadoPT (Caliphate PT).
- According to VEJA, Brazilian intelligence identified [Ismail Abdul-Jabbar al-Brazili](#), aka "the Brazilian," as a virtual profile responsible for providing Portuguese content on social media in support of ISIS. "Al-Brazili" is believed to have been recruited by Abu Khalid Al-Amriki, an American ISIS fighter who died in Syria.



"Brazil, you're our next target, we will attack this shitty country." – **Maxime Hauchard**, alleged French ISIS propaganda leader and executioner via Twitter on November 2015.

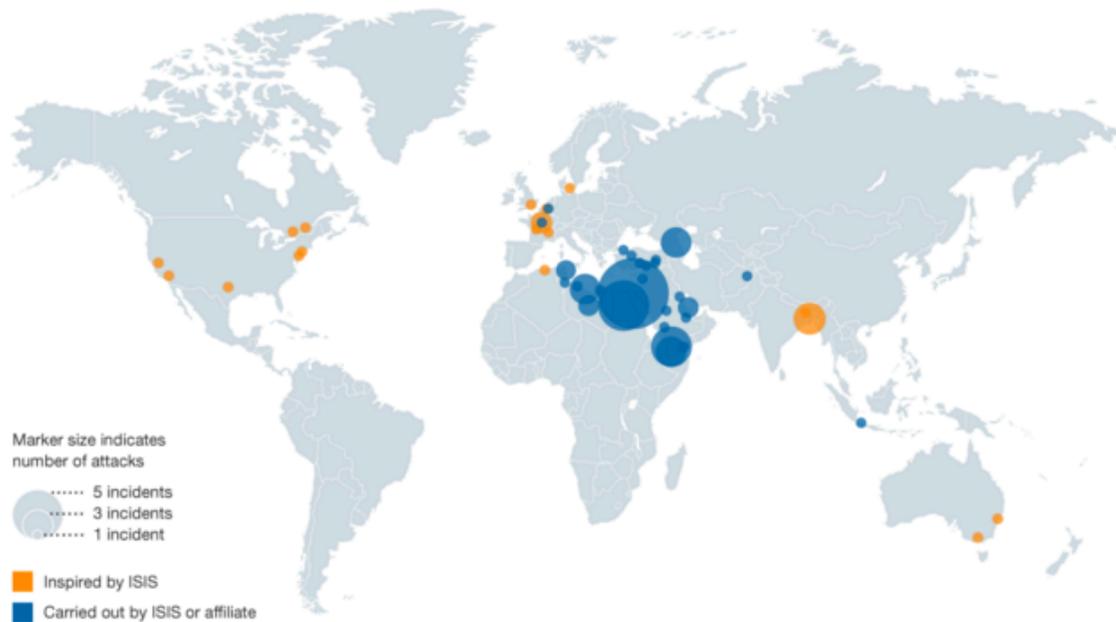


Chilean national, [Francis Peña Orellana](#), was part of a "larger ring of ISIS recruiters" detained in Spain for radicalizing youth via social-media Facebook and WhatsApp.



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Potential ISIS Attack on the Horizon?



ISIS and affiliated terrorist attacks have hit 5 continents worldwide. Not yet touched is South America. The Rio 2016 Olympic Games present an opportunity to add this continent to the [ISIS Global Attack Map](#).

As a major international multi-sport event – Rio 2016 – is expected to attract approximately half a million tourists from around the world and more than 10,000 of the world’s best athletes from 206 nations, creating an attractive target for a variety of terrorist organizations. Sporting events will take place at 33 venues in Rio de Janeiro, 5 venues in São Paulo (Brazil’s largest city), and at a venue in Belo Horizonte, Salvador, Brasilia (Brazil’s capital), and Manaus, each. An attack-plan similar to the one in Paris in 2015 by means of IEDs and firearms, carried out in multiple locations or cities throughout Brazil, creates an enormous challenge for Brazilian security forces. In the last month, at least three Islamic terrorist plots have already been thwarted:

1. **July 11** – A Brazilian woman claimed her Algerian husband was planning to [blow up Brasilia’s Juscelino Kubitschek International Airport](#). Brazilian authorities searched the couple’s home but found no explosives.



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2. **July 13** - French authorities uncovered a [plot to attack the French Delegation in Brazil](#). French General Christophe Gomart said he learned of the plot in May while investigating prior ISIS attacks in Paris in November 2015.
3. **July 21** - [10 men arrested in Brazil](#) for attempting to carry out a terrorist attack weeks prior to the start of the Olympic Games. Reports claim the men were not directly tied to ISIS but tried to make contact with the terrorist group. At the time, two additional suspects were at large.

In addition to these neutralized terrorist plots, Brazilian authorities have arrested and are monitoring several ISIS supporters in the lead up to the Games:

1. **July 18** - Brazilian officials [denied Rio Olympics accreditation to 4 individuals](#) believed to be linked to terrorism and recommended another 11,000 be rejected for security reasons. Of those, about 40 have been flagged by international intelligence agencies for having links to terrorism.
2. **July 25** - Brazilian authorities, with the help of the FBI, [arrest the 12th suspect](#) in a group allegedly planning to carry out an attack in Rio 2016.
3. **July 29** - A Brazilian Muslim of Lebanese descent, [Chaer Kalaoun](#), was arrested in Rio after traveling to Syria to pledge allegiance to ISIS. Authorities believe he was involved with terrorist groups dating back to the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.
4. **July 29** - Brazilian police arrest a Lebanese man, [Fadhi Hassan Nabha](#), who was on an INTERPOL wanted list for drug trafficking since 2013. Nabha served in Hezbollah's special services and had weapons and explosives training.

With dozens of individuals arrested for allegedly plotting to carry out terrorist attacks, and hundreds more flagged as potential supporters of Jihadi groups, the question remains: **How are these Islamic radicals infiltrating Brazil?**



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The Logistical Missing Link?



Perhaps the most notable case raising concern ahead of Rio 2016 is the disappearance of former GTMO detainee, **Jihad Ahmed Mustafa Diyab**. According to a classified Department of Defense detainee assessment (released by WikiLeaks), Diyab was a member of the Global Jihad Support Network and specialized in document forgery.

- Read the [JTF GTMO detainee assessment of Jihad Ahmed Diyab](#) prepared on April 21, 2008 recommending Continued Detention under DoD Control.

Captured by Pakistani police in 2002, Diyab was transferred to GTMO to provide information on Al Qaeda's logistical activities, including its lesser known support from Iran. Born in Lebanon to a Syrian father and Argentine mother, Diyab served in the Syrian Air Force and lived in Syria and Saudi Arabia prior to moving to Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2000. In Syria, he was sentenced to death in absentia for supposed terrorist activities. Unable to gain legal entry into Pakistan, Diyab received support in Iran to assist his illegal crossing over the Iran/Pakistan border evading authorities.

- In December 2014, Diyab was [released from GTMO](#) and relocated to Montevideo, Uruguay as part of the White House strategy to close the GTMO Detention Camp in Cuba.
- Prior to leaving Uruguay, Diyab [traveled to Argentina](#) in search of his family, then later attempted to [legally travel to Brazil](#) but was barred by Brazilian authorities.
- In June 2016, Diyab disappeared from Uruguay with whereabouts unknown.



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- Recent reports confirmed Diyab illegally crossed the border into Brazil and traveled by bus into Venezuela, where he [resurfaced at the Uruguayan consulate in Caracas](#) .

Diyab's recent travel to Brazil and Venezuela, months prior to Rio 2016, are cause for concern. His ability to evade authorities at border crossings presents gaps in Brazil's capabilities (note: Diyab already proved he could navigate complicated border crossings when moving between Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan). His reappearance in Venezuela is suspect given that country is known to support and facilitate the movement of Islamic terrorists, namely by providing fraudulent state-sponsored documentation, a specialty Jihad Ahmed Diyab is known to possess.

[See SFS Policy Report on Venezuela's ties to Islamic terrorists.](#)

Commencement Countdown to Rio 2016



The 2016 Rio Olympic Games start on August 5th. Brazilian and international authorities are working overtime to prepare and take the necessary countermeasures against a potential terrorist attack. As the clock ticks down, the world is watching and hoping it will not have to feel the jolt of another ISIS attack.

This SITREP is aimed at educating the public on the threat level in Brazil and encouraging vigilance ahead of Rio 2016.