

ISIS

Islamic State of Iraq
and Syria

ISIS is a shorthand name for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and it has made news in the past few months....

....for its dramatic military conquest of Iraqi territory

...its ruthless treatment of Iraqi minorities such as the Yazidis,

...and a string of videotaped beheadings of Western hostages



What is ISIS?
What do you
know about
ISIS?



- The situation in Iraq and Syria is complex, to say the least.
- It presents a continuing humanitarian crisis, with millions of people fleeing for their lives, and hundreds of thousands being killed.





- It presents a threat to Middle East stability, with ISIS promising to create an Islamic caliphate, or state, erasing modern borders and imposing its own version of fundamentalist law.
- Furthermore, ISIS presents an unknown threat to the larger world with the militant group beheading international hostages and recruiting jihadists from across the globe.



(8) FACTS THAT EXPLAIN THE ESCALATING CRISIS IN IRAQ

UPDATED BY ZACK BEAUCHAMP ON JUNE 13, 2014, 9:49 A.M. ET

1. ISIS used to be called al-Qaeda in Iraq

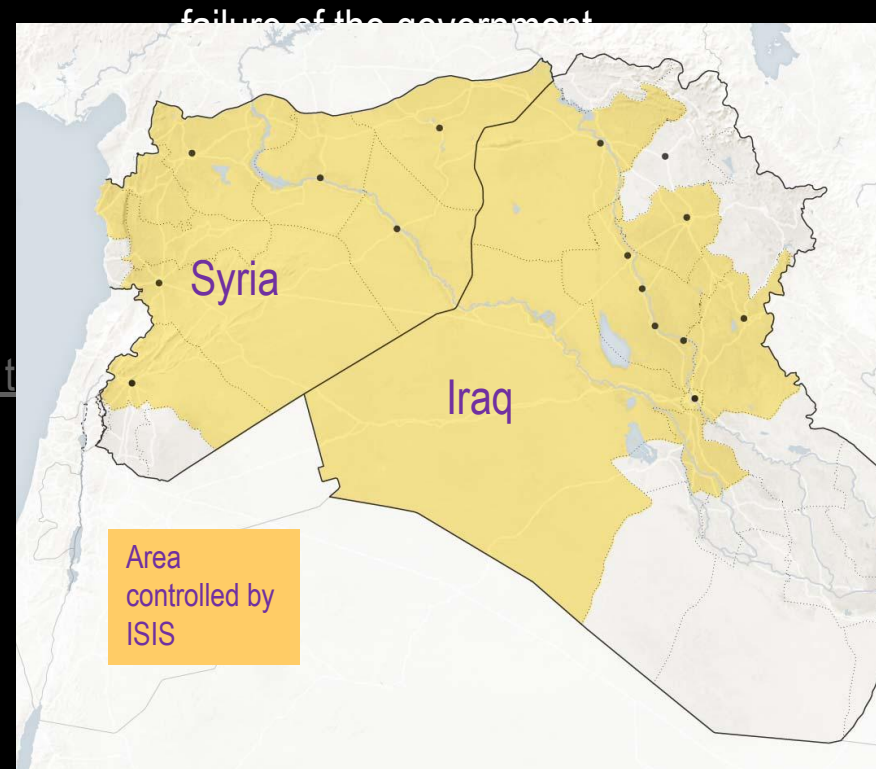
- It's essentially a rebooted version of al-Qaeda in Iraq, the Islamist group that rose to power after the American invasion.
- US troops and allied Sunni militias defeated AQI during the post-2006 "surge," but it didn't demolish them.
- In 2011, the group rebooted. ISIS successfully freed a number of prisoners held by the Iraqi government and, slowly but surely, began rebuilding their strength.
- The chaos today is a direct result of the Iraqi government's failure to stop them.





2. ISIS WANTS TO CREATE AN ISLAMIC STATE IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

- Their goal since being founded in 2004 has been remarkably consistent: found a Sunni Islamic state.
- "They want complete in Iraq. They want to establish a caliphate in Iraq."
- Even after ISIS split with in February 2014 was
ISIS' goal remained the same.



3. ISIS THRIVES ON TENSION BETWEEN IRAQ'S TWO LARGEST RELIGIOUS GROUPS

- Perhaps the single most important factor in ISIS' recent resurgence is the conflict between Iraqi Shias and Iraqi Sunnis
 - These are the two major denominations of ISLAM
- ISIS fighters are Sunnis, and the tension between the two groups is a powerful recruiting tool for ISIS.
- Shias run the govt and Sunnis don't feel they are fairly represented and have been treated poorly



4. THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT HAS MADE THIS TENSION WORSE BY PERSECUTING SUNNIS AND THROUGH OTHER MISSTEPS

- Police have killed peaceful Sunni protestors and used anti-terrorism laws to mass-arrest Sunni civilians.
- ISIS cannily exploited that brutality to recruit new fighters.

5. ISIS raises money like a government

- In Syria, they've built up something like a mini-state: collecting the equivalent of taxes and selling electricity to fund its militant activities.
- Some reports suggest they've restarted oil fields in eastern Syria.

6. Iraq has another major ethno-religious group, the Kurds, who could matter in this fight

- Kurds are mostly Sunnis, but they're ethnically distinct from Iraqi Arabs.
- There's somewhere between 80,000 and 240,000 Kurdish peshmerga (militias)
- They're well equipped and trained, and represent a serious military threat to ISIS.
- They have started to fight back as ISIS has attacked them



7. Mosul, the big city ISIS recently conquered, is really important — and ISIS has spread out from there

- Mosul is the second-largest city in Iraq
- It's fairly close to major oilfields.
- It's close to the Mosul Dam which is important in the country's water supply

8. The Iraqi Army is much larger than ISIS, but also a total mess

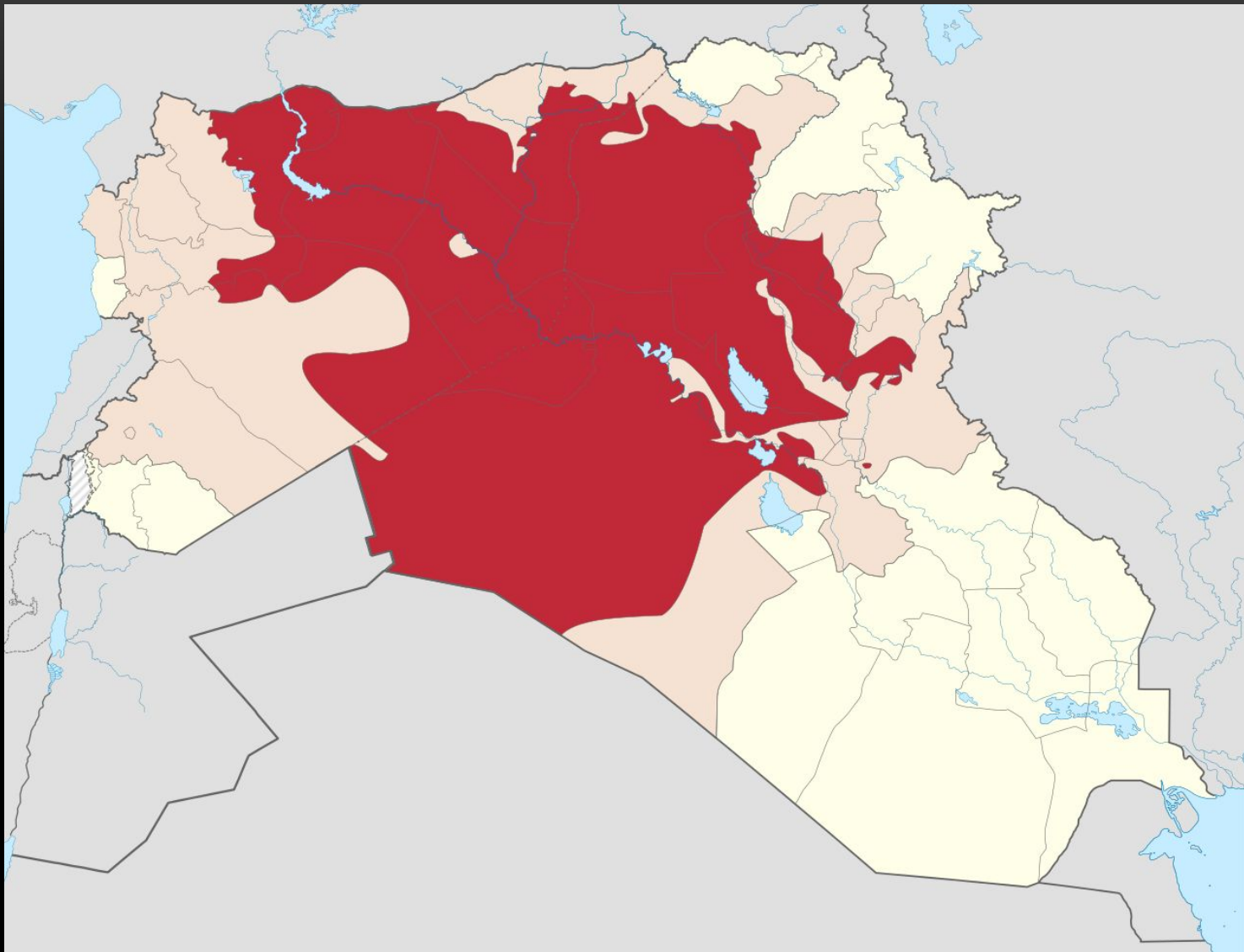
- ISIS has a bit more than 7,000 combat troops
- The Iraqi army has 250,000 troops, plus armed police.
- That Iraqi military also has tanks, airplanes, and helicopters.
- But the Iraqi army is also a total mess, which explains why ISIS has had the success it's had despite being outnumbered.
 - Take ISIS' victory in Mosul: 30,000 Iraqi troops ran from 800 ISIS fighters
 - Those are 40:1 odds! Yet Iraqi troops ran because they simply didn't want to fight and die for this government. There had been hundreds of desertions per month for months prior to the events of June 10th. The escalation with ISIS is, of course, making it worse.

THE FIGHT IN IRAQ



General Qasem Soleimani





Area controlled by ISIS (1 November 2014)



Area controlled by ISIS (3 February 2015)

THE ANTI-ISIS COALITION



THANK YOU FOR ATTENTION