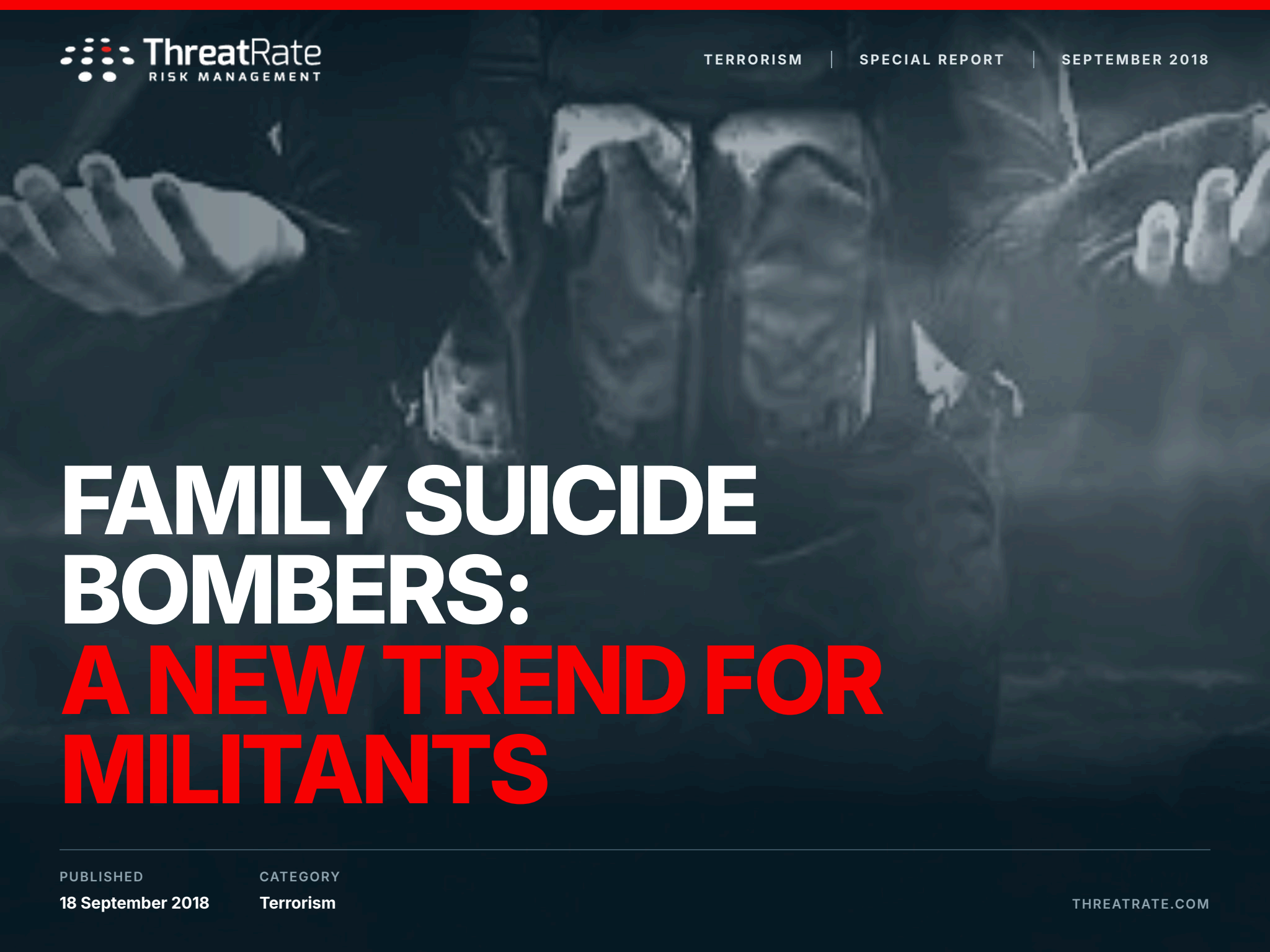


FAMILY SUICIDE BOMBERS: A NEW TREND FOR MILITANTS

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Family Suicide Bombers: A New Trend for Militants

Most, when they think of suicide bombers, think of the lone bomber – often a younger male that is - in some manner, disaffected from society for some reason which, subsequently, renders him susceptible to radicalization. Originally deployed by the nationalist Tamil Tigers (LTTE) in their conflict with the Sri Lankan government over the creation of a Tamil nation in the island's north and east (which they called Eelam), Jihadist organizations throughout the world added a religious dimension to the tactic. Contrary to the stereotype, the demographics of suicide bombers has been diversifying for years, and, indeed, from its inception in Sri Lanka, suicide bombing was not wholly male dominated. For example, over a two week period in the summer of 2017, multiple ISIS (Islamic State) suicide attacks were conducted by women and at least one involved a woman killing both herself and her young child.

That last point – the use of children and, indeed the undertaking of attacks by an entire family is a newer phenomenon that is raising new challenges for security personnel in countries with active Jihadist groups.

Women, children or entire families tend to be able to evade significant scrutiny by state security forces. Moreover, children – due to their inherent trust in their parents – are much more easily radicalized.

Thus, an attack by an entire family, can both be more successful and, its magnitude can be compounded because there are more people involved.

This deadly logic has been demonstrated successfully in West Africa where Boko Haram, the Nigerian-based group, has used female suicide bombers in 244 of the 434 bombers it's sent out on missions between April 2011 and June 2017. They are, in fact, the first group where females constituted a majority of its suicide bombers. The Nigerian group has also been at the forefront of using children as suicide bombers. Over the same time, Boko Haram deployed 53 teenagers and 28 little girls (12 years old and younger).

This dual effectiveness was put on display on May 13, 2018 in East Java, Indonesia when a family of six carried out multiple suicide bombings against three different churches that resulted in 13 deaths and over 40 injured. Jemaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), an ISIS affiliate in Indonesia, claimed responsibility in the attack.

The very next day, May 14th, a family of five used two motorcycles to attack a police station in Indonesia that wounded 10 people and killed the entire family (except for an eight-year-old girl). This attack, likewise, was claimed by JAD.

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This has caused countries – especially those known for their moderation like Indonesia – to begin to reflect on how to de-radicalize militants, combat militancy itself, and handle the influx of citizens back into the country (that have gone overseas for training or to join militant groups in Iraq, Syria, or Afghanistan). Sidney Jones, the director of the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict in Indonesia, provided some suggested tactics for combating female and child suicide bombers. For example, the creation of mentoring systems for those caught trying to join jihadist groups abroad. There is also a state ideology, Pancasila, which is considered rather moderate that can be promoted in venues known to be breeding grounds for militancy.

Soundbite analytics

- From January-August 2017 83 children were used by Boko Haram to carry out bomb attacks.
- 55 of the attackers are women.
- Prior to Boko Haram, the Tamil Tigers were the record holders for female suicide attackers – 44 over a decade.
- Since 2011, 2.1 million people were displaced by Boko Haram.
- Boko Haram's activities have resulted in the deaths of 30,000 in north-east Nigeria and nearby countries.

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