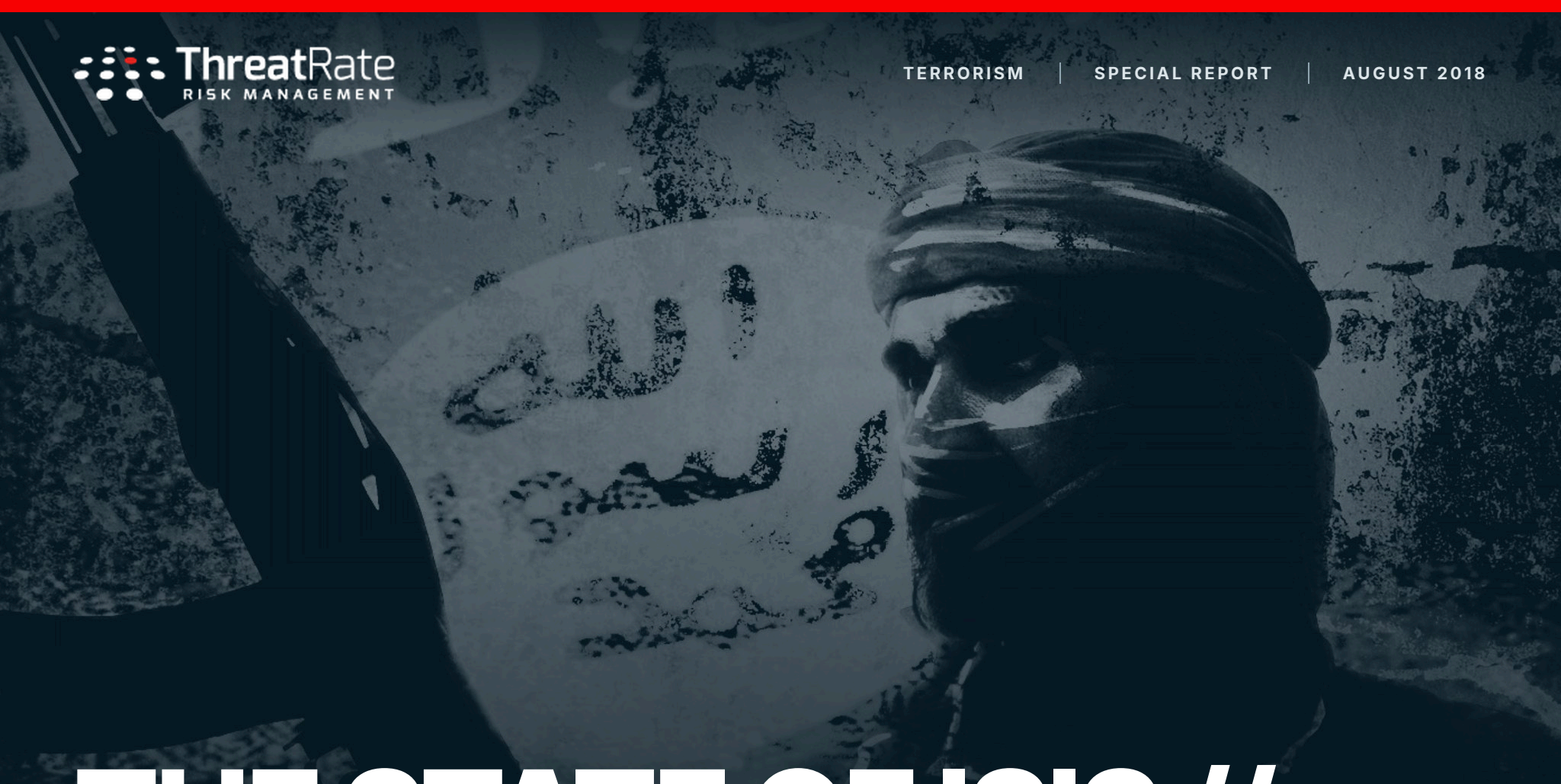


THE STATE OF ISIS // SUMMER 2018

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The State of ISIS // Summer 2018

Since at least 2014, ISIS – also known as the Islamic State – and its affiliates have been household names in much of the world because of their ability to rapidly take control of vast swaths of Iraq and Syria and their claiming of responsibility for terrorist attacks elsewhere in the world. At its peak, the unrecognized Islamic State held 34,000 square miles of land in Iraq and Syria and was able to march close to the borders of both Baghdad and Damascus. The United States, their Syrian/Kurdish allies, Iranian-backed Shiite militias, and the Iraqi government have been – in separate coalitions – engaging in a protracted war against ISIS to drive it out of Iraq and Syria; the endeavor has, at the very least, led to ISIS losing control of more than 99% of its land in both countries, and it has greatly diminished the ability for the organization to conduct operations as it has largely driven them underground and denied them vast quantities of revenue.

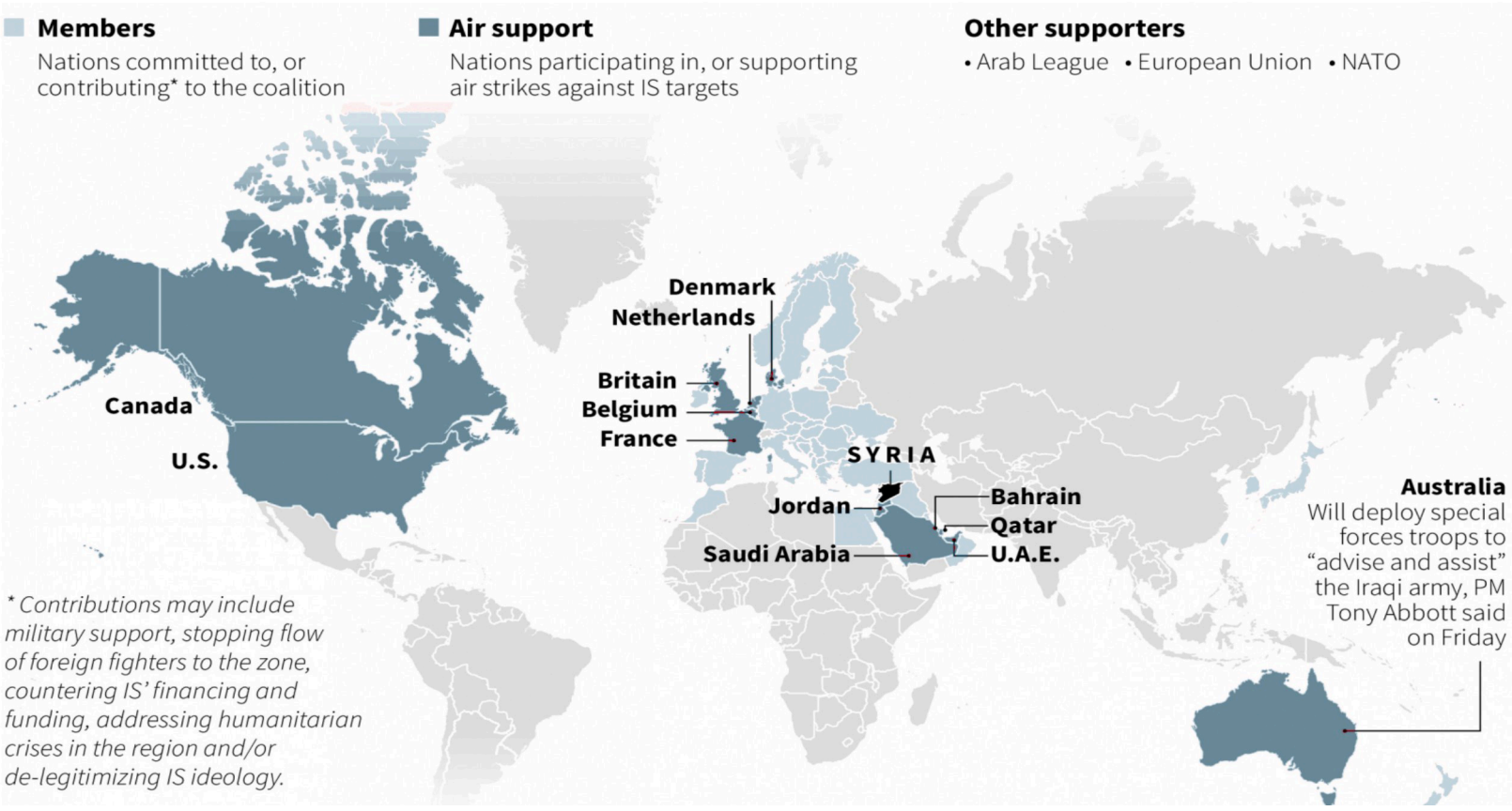
The three-year program to oust ISIS from their territory – while successful – may have ousted ISIS from all their controlled territories – exceptions include towns such as Hajin and some areas surrounded by Syrian government-held regions – it was not without costs. Many remember the slaughter of Yezidis – a religious minority largely in Iraq. It is believed that between 2,000 and 5,500 Yezidis were killed and an estimated 6,300 were kidnapped. In and around Sinjar, many mass graves were found and continue to be unexcavated. While ISIS members are charged with crimes in Iraq when apprehended, few – if any – have been charged with the crimes perpetrated against the Yezidis.

Despite their extreme setbacks in the Middle East, ISIS has, in other areas, worked to expand their geographic footprint – notably in conflict-prone Afghanistan. The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), ISIS's Afghan affiliate has been working diligently to embed itself into Afghanistan's culture of militancy and to expand its territory. They still exert significant influence over their stronghold Nangarhar; however, they have lost significant territory most recently due to the efforts of the Taliban who, despite similarities in ideology, strongly opposes ISIS and its encroachments into Afghanistan. For example, in late July, the Taliban freed the province of Jawzjan from ISIS partly by using commandos who were equipped with weapons and vehicles stolen from the Afghan army (who received them from the US and its allies). It should, however, also be noted that the US has recently launched missile strikes in the recently liberated Jawzjan province although neither the Taliban nor the United States have acknowledged or corroborated allegations of cooperation between the two in their shared objective of ridding Afghanistan of ISIS.

The United States, its allies, and parties such as Russia and Taliban have successfully dislodged ISIS from its claimed territories; nevertheless, it must be noted that the evidence thus far seems to indicate that the Taliban are extremely adaptable and that has allowed them to position themselves as a center of power in Afghanistan at the expense of the government on account of their successes against ISIS. If they can continue to weaken ISIS and if their recent efforts create an opportunity to further discuss peace with the Afghan government and the United States has yet to be determined.

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THE COALITION AGAINST ISIS



https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-timeline-islamic-state-1508465 (All image rights reserved to Reuters)

Soundbite analytics

- The US has spent more money (inflation adjusted) on Afghanistan than on the entirety of the Marshall Plan for Europe after WWII.
- ISIS in Afghanistan is estimated to have 3,000-5,000 fighters.
- 90% of the Yezidi population has been displaced.
- The Sinjar region was, prior to ISIS, home to 360,000 Yezidis.
- The civilian death toll from the three-year battle against ISIS in Iraq has been estimated at 66,737.

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SOURCES

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