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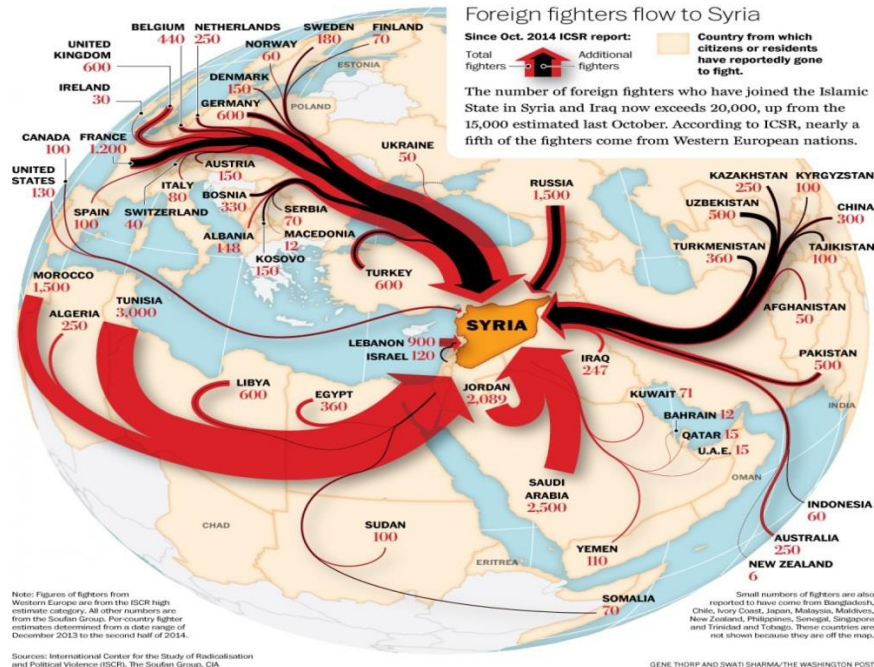
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<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2015/01/27/map-how-the-flow-of-foreign-fighters-to-iraq-and-syria-has-surged-since-october/>

## Map: How the flow of foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria has surged since October

By Swati Sharma  
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The number of foreign fighters traveling to Iraq and Syria, mostly to fight alongside the Islamic State, has grown to 20,000 — up more than 5,000 from previous estimates made in October, according to the International Center for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence (ICSR).

These new figures are alarming, inasmuch as they indicate that the conflict has attracted more foreign militants than the conflict in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The last time this many militants traveled to fight in a foreign conflict was in 1945.

Another key takeaway from the new data is that, at 4,000, a fifth of the foreign fighters come from Western nations. While estimates from countries in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia and Tunisia, fluctuated a little, there were huge increases in fighters coming from European nations.

France previously accounted for 412 fighters traveling to Iraq and Syria. The new data show that number has almost tripled, to 1,200. The Netherlands, Britain and Austria all accounted for about 100 additional fighters.

Belgium, a much smaller nation, went from 296 to 440 and has the highest number of fighters per capita of any Western nation. The country has been "experiencing the consequences of what critics call decades of ineffectiveness in integrating immigrants, including many Muslims." According to a story by my colleague Michael Birnbaum:

*[T]he country faces particular challenges because it has long been starkly divided itself, with bitter rivalries between a Dutch-speaking north and a French-speaking south. That has hurt the coherence of the government's response and exacerbated the difficulties that immigrants have had fitting in.*

Germany, a country in the news for its anti-Islamization movement, saw the number of fighters going overseas more than double in just four months. According to a report by the ICSR:

*The number of Germans immigrating to Syria has risen massively over the past two years. Islamists have tried to recruit German-speaking Muslims in the past, but now their efforts have grown in both quality and quantity.*

The Middle East still accounts for the highest number of foreigners fighting in Iraq and Syria.