



**COUNTER IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES
CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**

CTRA M 618 KM 10,400. 28240 HOYO DE MANZANARES - MADRID. SPAIN

info@ciedcoe.org

C-IED COE Reference: S272-2019

Subject: (REPORT) Threat from Jihadist use of arson fires as a weapon

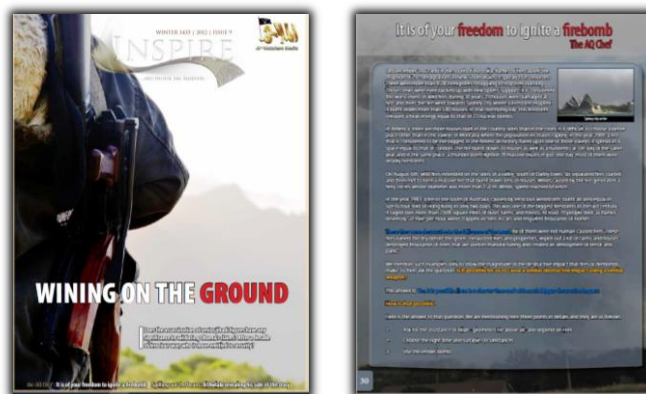
(This report follows a chronological & correlational process in its analysis, which would require its reading as a whole.)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Arson fire is not a new weapon of choice for terrorist purposes, among many other cases, we could identify;

- March 25, 1990 (New York, USA) – gasoline was burned at the exit of a night club, resulting in 87 killed persons;
- December 2000 (New York, USA) – arson fires campaign from eco-terrorism;
- September 11, 2001 (New York, USA) – the fire as a consequence from airplanes' impact was the cause for most of the almost 3,000 deaths;
- November 28, 2008 (Mumbai, IND) - Lashkar-i-Tayyiba fighters caused an arson fire at Taj Mahal hotel, which produced several casualties;
- September 11, 2012 (Benghazi, LBY) – arson fire was used against the USA Mission during the attack sponsored by elements of Ansar al-Sharia and Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM);
- Use of Molotov cocktails by threat networks has been habitual from decades ago;
- Several other plots regarding arson fires (e.g. sabotage of fire safety and gas lines in buildings) from Al-Qaeda militants have been disposed in the United States, the United Kingdom and some other countries...

Although improvised incendiary devices have usually been included in insurgent/terrorist manuals & propaganda from time ago, it was on May 2nd 2012 when Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) published the article *"It Is of Your Freedom to Ignite a Firebomb"* in 9th issue of INSPIRE digital magazine, just promoting the use of arson fires in woodland, while instructing about how to manufacture improvised incendiary devices.



"INSPIRE" magazine, 9th issue May 2012 (Source – www.archive.org)

The fifth issue of DAESH's magazine "RUMIYAH" was released in January 2017, including an article about "Arson Attacks", just recommending their terrorist use.



"RUMIYAH" magazine, 5th issue January 2017 (Source – www.archive.org)

LAST TWO-YEAR ACTIVITY

From 2018, Gaza Strip has been a scenario of arson fires caused by balloons fitted with incendiary devices, which have been burning crops in Israeli land; that matter has been widely distributed and visible through social media, and news agencies.

The 150th issue of Al-Naba magazine (released 4 October 2018) highlighted the high impact of California fires over the whole country. It was followed by several comments in social media regarding why and how to cause those fires...



Page from Al-Naba #150 & capture from Telegram comment "With only five euros" (Source – www.twitter.com)

Between May & June 2019, Daesh-promoted "AL-NABA" digital newsletter was showing the effects of intentional arson fires developed by Daesh's factions over Iraqi farmers' crops; simultaneously, other regional Media Agencies (e.g. MAQDISI) were giving relevance and producing propaganda about it; those fires in Iraq were imitated in Jordanian territory too.



"Al-NABA" magazine #183 & #184, June 2019 (Source – www.archive.org, Telegram)

The first video explicitly referring to arson fires in California ("And no one knows the soldiers of your lord except for him") was released by Al-Battar Media Foundation in March 2019; the English message in the video is highlighting the consequences from 2018 California fires, and directly recommending the choice of arson fires to commit attacks in the West.



Captures from Al-Battar Media Foundation video, as released on March 22nd 2019 (Source – www.qhuraba.pw, Telegram)

And it was on March 19th 2019 when a "non-very-well-known-by-then" Daesh's unofficial agency (AL-QURAYSH) published and released a poster in which the production of arson fires in Europe and United States was incited through "targeting forest and farms", and reinforcing the action with the message "... it is painful to them". There was even a Telegram channel in which that message was commented and refined as "To the monotheists; set fire to forests and farms. If you are living in Europe and America, this is Great Jihad".



Poster from Al-Quraysh Media (Source – Twitter, Telegram)

Al-Abd al-Faqir Media Foundation was promoting the development of arson fires by Daesh's followers in May 2019 too.



Poster from Al-Faqir Media (Source – Telegram)

Al-Quraysh Media distributed propaganda asking for arson fires to Daesh's fighters last June 2019 again.



Posters from Al-Quraysh Media (Source – Telegram, www.memri.com)

Other jihadist propaganda sources have been distributing three posters in French language urging for arson fires against the unbelievers late October 2019.



Posters promoting arson fires in French language (Source – Twitter)

CURRENT DYNAMICS FROM JIHADIST PROPAGANDA: AL-QURAYSH MEDIA's ROLE

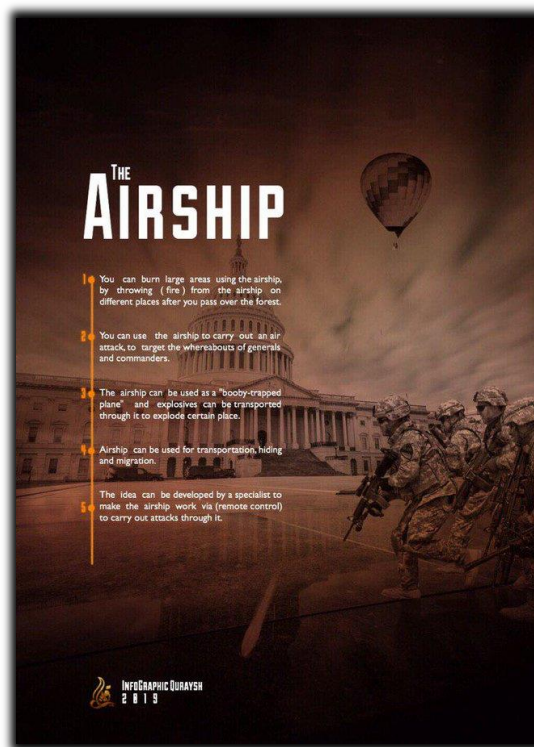
Aiming to open their scope, Al-Quraysh Media announced to include English language in their propaganda late September 2019.

From the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Al-Quraysh Media has been acquiring some sort of co-leading role in Daesh-related propaganda, which reached its higher point when Al-Quraysh published a message urging Daesh's followers to only pay attention to Daesh's official media agencies, between which Al-Quraysh members included themselves.

But the most worrying action from Al-Quraysh Media has taken place during last days before the production of this report, when four successive posters has been released by Al-Quraysh including direct reference to the terrorist use of arson fires.



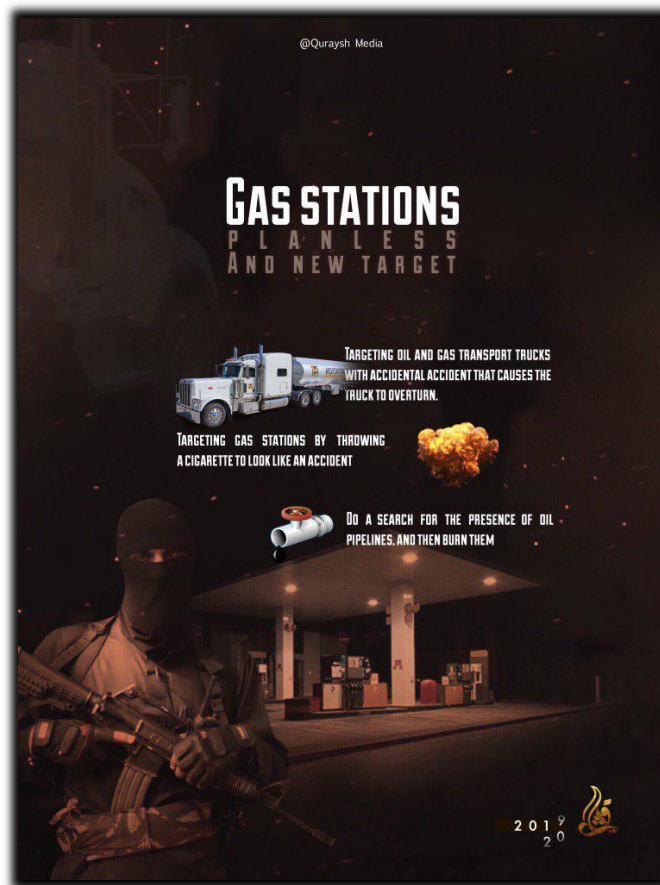
Al-Quraysh Media's poster promoting arson fires as released on November 16th 2019 (Source – Twitter, Telegram)



Al-Quraysh Media's poster promoting use of airships & arson fires, November 17th 2019 (Source – Twitter, Telegram)



Al-Quraysh Media's poster promoting arson fires in Europe, November 18th 2019 (Source – Twitter, Telegram)



Al-Quraysh Media's poster promoting arson fires through gas stations, November 19th 2019 (Source – Twitter, Telegram)

So Al-Quraysh is constantly influencing Daesh's followers to conduct attacks through arson fires, even including ideas about the use of aerial unmanned platforms as device's vectors; the further connection with drones and/or balloons is highly expectable.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

The current conjunction of several factors (e.g increase in influence activities promoting arson fires, distribution of propaganda about balloons' use for firing crops in Gaza, high visibility of jihadist & non-jihadist videos showing drones for dropping devices or launching pyrotechnics, the easy access to incendiary chemicals and pyrotechnics...) is making the threat derived from the use of arson fires for terrorist purposes more and more probable.

The potential risk coming from the making of fires in European & American forests/crops during dry and windy seasons would have a high impact in economy, tourism, society feelings about safety, government control in benefit of security... even the potential connection between arson fires and terrorism would create a social terror environment, most probably increased by the typical Media management of the related information.

The use of aerial platforms could provide a lot of flexibility, adaption, range, and dynamic planning to the production of arson fires.

The investigator's difficulty in attributing arson fires along with the relative low punishment applied for that kind of crimes could both be factors to get considered by a potential attacker.

The increasingly relevant role of Al-Quraysh media is giving them a higher potential for influencing the individual/group terrorist mindset, and Al-Quraysh propaganda is strongly recommending actions related to arson fires in Western lands.

All pieces of information used to build this document are exclusively & strictly based on open-sources.

Editor- OF-4 Jose RUFAS

Attack the Networks Branch Chief

jrufas@ciedcoe.org

Approved on 21st of November 2019

Col Cruz Moro
C-IED CoE Director

DISCLAIMER: *The information in this document/presentation only represents the point of view of NATO C-IED CoE about the subject according to our knowledge and expertise, and do not reflect the official policy or position of any other organization or National postures.*