



# Global Insights Report

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Ransom, Extortion and Piracy around the world

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Russia/Ukraine, Algeria, Philippines.

April 2024

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# Russia/Ukraine

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## Civilian Detainees

Russia has detained about 1,600 civilians in the occupied areas of Ukraine

Source: Centre for Civil Liberties

## Military Service

More than 18,000 Ukrainians have been detained by Ukrainian Border Security trying to leave the country to avoid military service

Source: The Times

## Evan Gershkovich

Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich has been detained in Russia since March 2023

## Gonzalo Lira

Chilean-American Gonzalo Lira died whilst being detained in Ukraine on 12 January 2024

Source: Helsinki Times







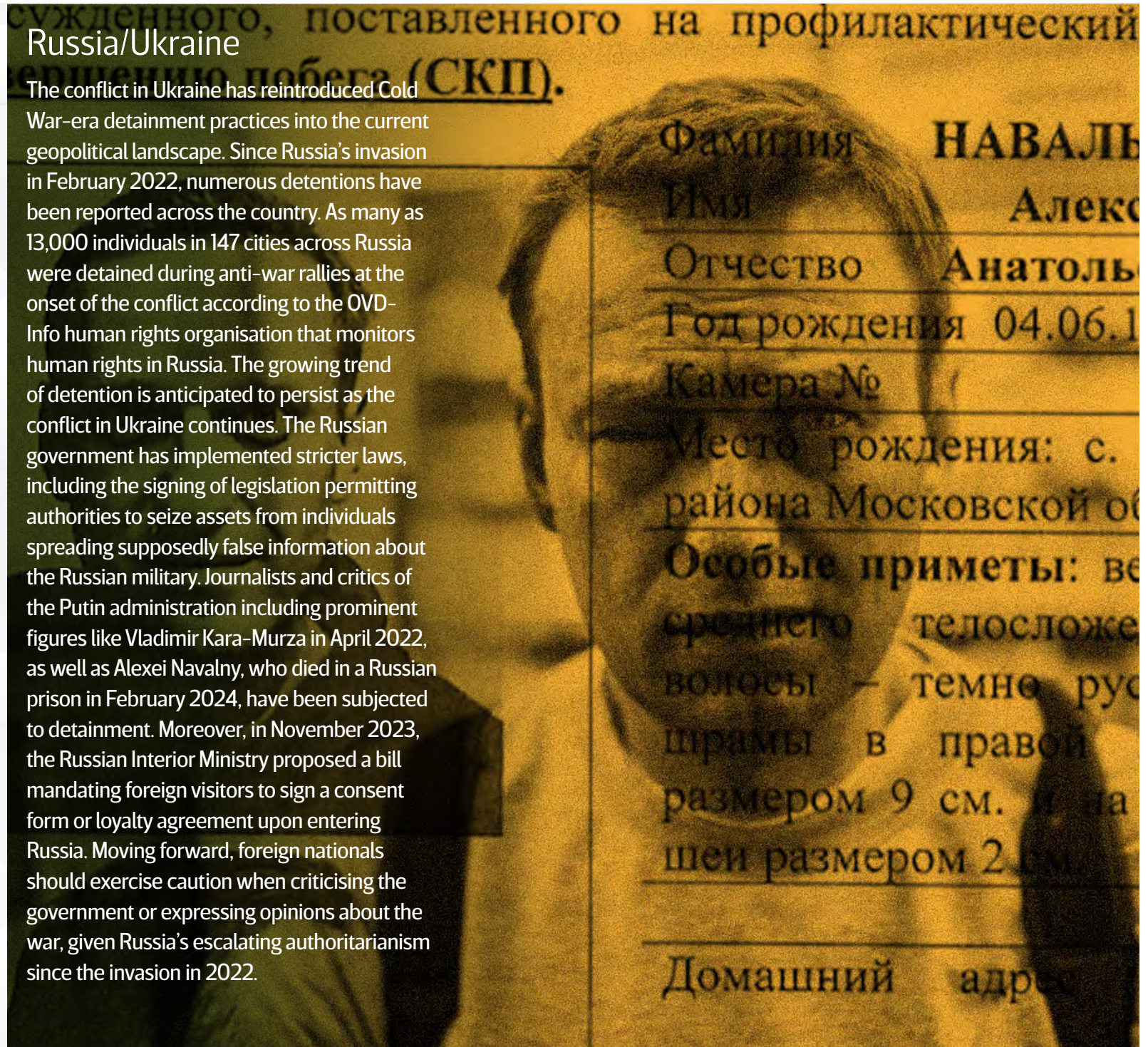
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## Russia/Ukraine

The conflict in Ukraine has reintroduced Cold War-era detention practices into the current geopolitical landscape. Since Russia's invasion in February 2022, numerous detentions have been reported across the country. As many as 13,000 individuals in 147 cities across Russia were detained during anti-war rallies at the onset of the conflict according to the OVD-Info human rights organisation that monitors human rights in Russia. The growing trend of detention is anticipated to persist as the conflict in Ukraine continues. The Russian government has implemented stricter laws, including the signing of legislation permitting authorities to seize assets from individuals spreading supposedly false information about the Russian military. Journalists and critics of the Putin administration including prominent figures like Vladimir Kara-Murza in April 2022, as well as Alexei Navalny, who died in a Russian prison in February 2024, have been subjected to detention. Moreover, in November 2023, the Russian Interior Ministry proposed a bill mandating foreign visitors to sign a consent form or loyalty agreement upon entering Russia. Moving forward, foreign nationals should exercise caution when criticising the government or expressing opinions about the war, given Russia's escalating authoritarianism since the invasion in 2022.







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## Russia/Ukraine

The detainment of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich serves as a stark example of how foreign nationals are increasingly vulnerable to Cold War-style tactics resurfacing in the present geopolitical climate. Western travellers and businesspeople must remain vigilant as significant distrust now characterises relations between the West and Russia. In a recent development, Russian-American woman Ksenia Karelina was detained by the Russian security agency, the FSB, on charges of treason, highlighting the precarious situation faced by Western nationals. These detainments are often exploited as political bargaining chips in Russia's interactions with the West, which can often result in long periods of detainment.



Ksenia Karelina





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## Russia/Ukraine

On the other hand, Ukraine has also experienced state-led detentions since the beginning of the conflict in 2022. As the situation has worsened for Ukraine, especially with Russia's perceived upper hand, the country is facing a notable shortage of manpower, which has become a significant concern. The Kviv Independent has reported that Ukraine has used press gangs in the past to forcibly conscript men into the military. Many videos on social media have indicated this draconian method being employed by the Territorial Recruitment Center staff who grab men off the streets and throw them into vans. Moreover, similar to Russia, criticism of the war in Ukraine can result in arrests. For example, in May 2023, YouTuber Gonzalo Lira was detained for his critical views of the Zelensky government and subsequently died while in detention in January 2024. Therefore, despite the full support of the West for Ukraine, it is crucial to highlight that foreign nationals in Ukraine should be mindful of the potential consequences that may follow open criticism of the government or its policy.







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# Algeria

## Tier 3 Trafficking

Algeria remains the only North African, Mediterranean coast country to hold a Tier 3 US State Department trafficking in person rating in the 2023 publication Source: U.S. Department of State

## Extortion/Racketeering

Extortion and protection racketeering are reported as being prevalent in the country

Source: The Global Organised Crime Index

## Media CEO Kidnapped

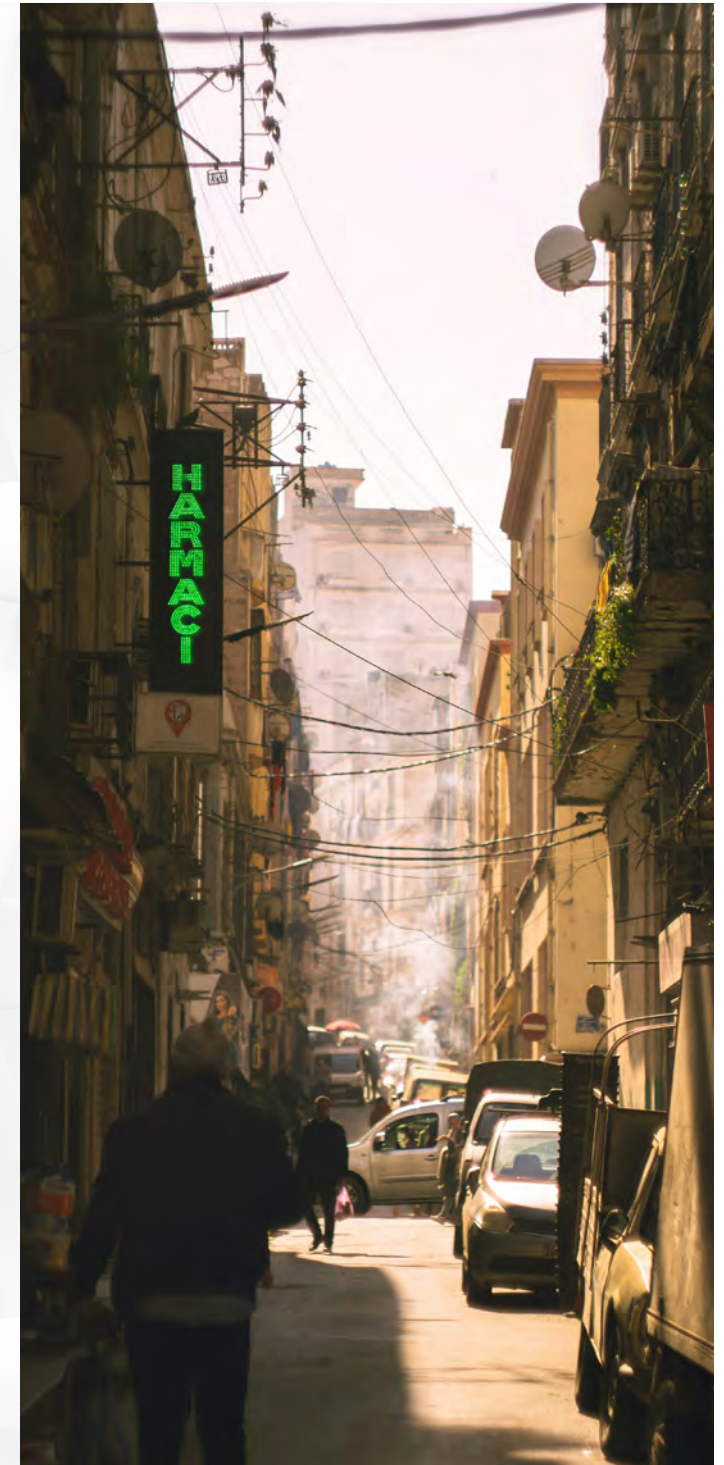
The CEO of an Algerian media company was kidnapped in 2019 by government security forces

## Level 2 Travel Warning

US State department places a level two travel warning due to the risks of kidnapping and terrorism Source: U.S. Department of State

## Kidnapping rate is 1.3 per 100,000

Source: World Population Review

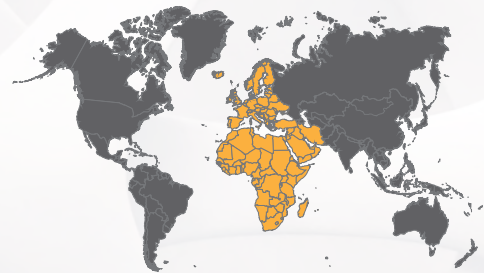






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## Algeria

Kidnapping, ransom, and extortion pose significant challenges to security and stability in Algeria, with incidents historically targeting both Algerian citizens and foreign nationals.

While the threat of foreign national kidnappings has decreased since the 2013 abduction of European tourists by militants affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, such incidents have underscored the vulnerability of foreigners to attacks in Algeria's remote areas, shaping the country's security landscape.







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## Algeria

Despite the decline in foreign national kidnappings, the growth of human trafficking networks within Algeria presents an expanding criminal capacity, exacerbated by systemic underreporting of current kidnapping crimes. The proliferation of human trafficking networks, reflected in the Tier 3 rating by the US State

Department on trafficking in persons, underscores the prevalence of extortion and protection rackets, particularly along under-policed border areas with neighbouring countries like Niger, Chad, and Sudan. Since 2019, Algeria has raised concerns about security in the Tindouf refugee camps, particularly regarding the kidnapping of foreign nationals,

particularly those with links to Spain. While the Algerian government has implemented measures to protect UN-run refugee camps, the demand for illegal migration and expanding criminal concerns suggest that these measures may be insufficient.







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## Algeria

Extortion activities, often involving threats of violence or harm, target Algerian businessmen and government officials for financial gain. In a notable incident in 2018, an Algerian businessman was abducted in Algiers and held for ransom, highlighting the profitability of such criminal enterprises within urban centres. Furthermore, the abduction of an Algerian media company CEO in 2019, allegedly by government security forces following his accusations against the president's brother regarding corruption, demonstrates the diverse range of threat actors in the country.

While incidents of radical Islamists kidnapping foreigners have decreased over the past decade, the recent surge in terrorist activity within the Middle East and the deepening territorial control of terror organisations across the Sahel region south of Algeria pose a potential risk. This risk is underscored by ongoing US State Department travel warnings for the risk of terrorism and kidnapping in Algeria and neighbouring regions.







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# Philippines

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## 20 Kidnappings

20 kidnapping incidents were recorded in the first 10 months of 2023

Source: The Philippine Star, 2023

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## 50% Decrease

2023 saw a 50% decrease over 2022's kidnapping figures

Source: The Philippine Star, 2023

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## Level 4 Warning

Level 4: Do Not Travel issued by U.S. government for Sulu Archipelago and Marawi City

Source: U.S. State Department, 2024

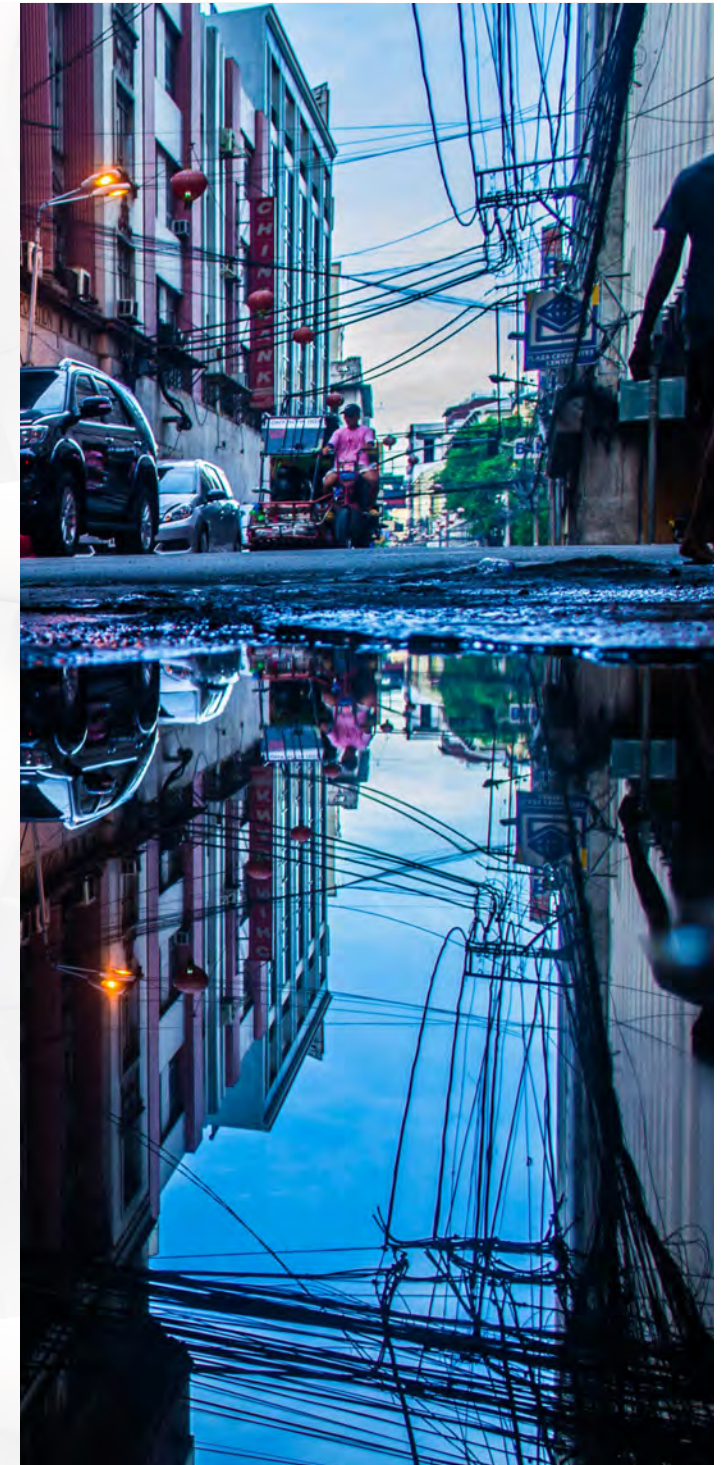
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## Chinese Kidnapping

Six Chinese nationals were kidnapped in November 2023 and later found murdered in Manila

Source: ABSCBN, 2023

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## Philippines



The Philippines suffers from high crime rates caused by clandestine urban gangs and Islamist resistance groups located within majority Muslim areas of the archipelago. Each of these groups presents a credible KRE threat to both domestic and foreign nationals, with kidnappings for economic purposes the most common motivation,

according to national police statistics. Express kidnappings are a frequent method employed by criminal gangs operating in metropolitan Manila and the Cavite province, while more traditional kidnapping for ransom methods are the tactic of choice among Islamist resistance groups located in the Sulu Sea and on the western side of Mindanao. Due to

the particularly high risk to foreigners posed by those resistance groups, both the U.S. State Department and the British FCDO advise against all travel to their areas of operation and only essential travel to the remainder of the island of Mindanao.





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## Philippines

However, threats to foreigners also persist in other areas and islands. On the 30th of October 2023, six Chinese nationals were kidnapped at gunpoint from their homes in Manila, four of whom were eventually killed by their captors. The victims were prominent members of Chinese charities operating in the area and were well-known to locals. As of yet, it is unclear whether the alleged perpetrators are linked to criminal gangs or whether there was a more interpersonal rationale behind the kidnapping. Regardless of the motive, this incident highlights the degraded security environment left by former President Rodrigo Duterte's tenure. Duterte's endorsement of vigilantism and extrajudicial killings as a method of countering gang violence resulted in a spike in lawlessness and recorded KRE incidents throughout the country following his ascent to power in 2016.







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## Philippines

Since taking office in 2022, President Bongbong Marcos, son of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, has mostly continued the authoritarian and extrajudicial law enforcement practices of his predecessor, albeit in a slightly softened manner. This marginal shift may have contributed to recent declines in overall crime statistics and KRE incidents in particular, with the

Filipino police Anti-Kidnapping Group claiming a nearly 50% decrease in cases between 2022 and 2023. However, such figures may not present the complete picture: Marcos' administration has been criticised by independent media for misinformation, while those same media outlets also suggest that KRE incidents suffer from systematic underreporting; thus, the claims made by Filipino national

police must be treated with an appropriate level of scepticism. Overall, the Philippines faces an uncertain future with regards to KRE trends, with it as yet unclear how Marcos Jr's policies will affect criminal groups, and Abu Sayyaf Group and other Daesh affiliates persisting as dormant threats.







## Propriety Information

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## Contact

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