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**Tom Sanderson, Fellow and Deputy Director, Transnational Threats, CSIS**

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### **Jihadists returning from Iraq pose a threat to Europe**

Muslim extremist fighters who left their homes and communities in Europe to join the Jihad in Iraq and Afghanistan will one day return as more threatening inhabitants. In fact, they already have. European-based members of the insurgency who are fighting U.S.-led coalition and Iraqi forces return to face a determined, but fractured and only partially prepared intelligence and law enforcement network in Europe. Germany alone is tracking dozens of individuals, some with German passports and others living there illegally, who left for Iraq's "Jihad stadium" created after the U.S. conducted a successful invasion followed by a pitiful post-war occupation.

The March 11 Madrid tragedy was marked by an encouraging and brave, Muslim-issued fatwa condemning Osama bin Laden. This was an important statement by representatives of the moderate Muslim majority. Spain's own nightmare with Islamic extremists was an unpleasant reminder that Washington, DC and New York City are not the only targets. The question before the rest of Europe has to be: who's next, when, and with what degree of impact? If you accept that another major attack is inevitable, then you can't help but be concerned with the return of European-based insurgents. Estimates place the number of foreign fighters in Iraq from 1,000 to 3,000. Recent U.S. intelligence intercepts overheard Osama bin Laden encouraging insurgent leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to attack the U.S., and he is believed to possess "dirty bomb" components at this time. Should the U.S. prove too distant or difficult to attack, Zarqawi may look closer to Iraq. Europe could be the next best target, and Zarqawi's network of fighters who return to poor neighborhoods outside of Paris, Frankfurt and Brussels present a well-trained and eager fighting force.

Those European militants who traveled to Iraq and survived, will return with well developed urban combat skills that will make the German Red Army Faction and Spain's ETA, with its courteous habit of providing telephone warnings before bombing, look like child's play. Because insurgents in Iraq are so effective despite being pursued by a fully engaged and highly skilled military force using flexible rules of engagement, there is real cause for concern in Europe. Consider the sophistication that results from daily skirmishes with U.S. and coalition forces: when the insurgents' trick of planting roadside bombs in animal carcasses soon became an old tactic, insurgent bomb makers built devices disguised as fake sidewalk curbing that was undetectable until too late.

Solutions to help confront this threat are not yet in place, and will likely be incomplete when fully implemented. What can be done? For starters, each nation can strengthen its own internal counterterrorism cooperation between multiple police and intelligence agencies. This should be done with great respect for fundamentally important civil rights—a requirement that can't be overemphasized. To fail to do so risks weakening the

character of a nation while also radicalizing potential terrorist recruits. Some European nations, most notably the United Kingdom, have taken important steps in this direction with the establishment terrorism intelligence sharing centers. One British method effective in this struggle is the recruitment of police officers directly from Islamic communities. Trust and real understanding is built in this way. When a few radicals return to neighborhoods and intimidate moderates, the police will have a badly needed advantage.

Internal security coordination and community policing will not be enough to prevent possible attacks in Europe. An effective approach also requires increased *multinational* cooperation in intelligence and law enforcement. Just as important, publicly available, open-source information is vital for providing largely absent context to the intelligence picture. Cooperation has been going on for many years, but it now has to improve significantly and quickly. Intelligence officers are trained not to share intelligence, and if they have to, to consider it compromised and publicized the moment it leaves their hands. A very influential foreign ambassador in Washington, DC has said that the concern for intelligence “leaks” is counterproductive and a thing of the past. The former Stasi and KGB, with their widespread penetration of Western intelligence agencies, could exploit a leak almost immediately. Al Qaeda does not have such capabilities...yet. So the time to act is now.

Though manufacture or acquisition is a low probability, terrorist use of WMD carries such catastrophic consequences, we must begin wider coordination and sharing as soon as possible. Even some non-WMD threats such as shoulder-fired missiles (U.S. Stinger and Russian SA-7) carry potentially enormous, global economic consequences. Key nations in the campaign against terrorism should make increased information sharing the rule rather than the exception. Relevant intelligence should be widely available among European law enforcement and intelligence agencies who are confronting the return of well-trained, networked Jihadis with few or no restrictions on their travel within the Schengen zone.

*Thomas M. Sanderson is the Deputy Director and Fellow in the Transnational Threats Project at the Washington, DC-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).*