

# *TRUCKS, KNIVES, BOMBS, WHATEVER*

*EXPLORING PRO-ISLAMIC STATE  
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL ON  
TELEGRAM*

*Bennett Clifford*

*10/19/2018*



Program on  
Extremism

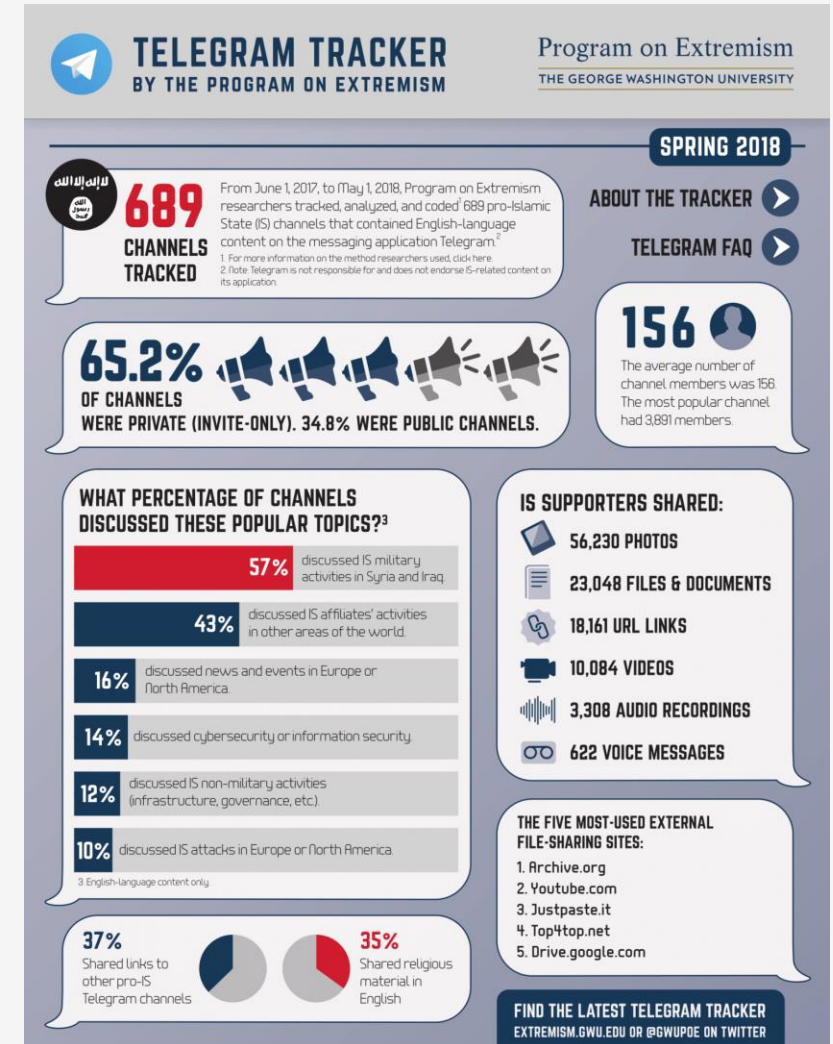
# *Key Questions*



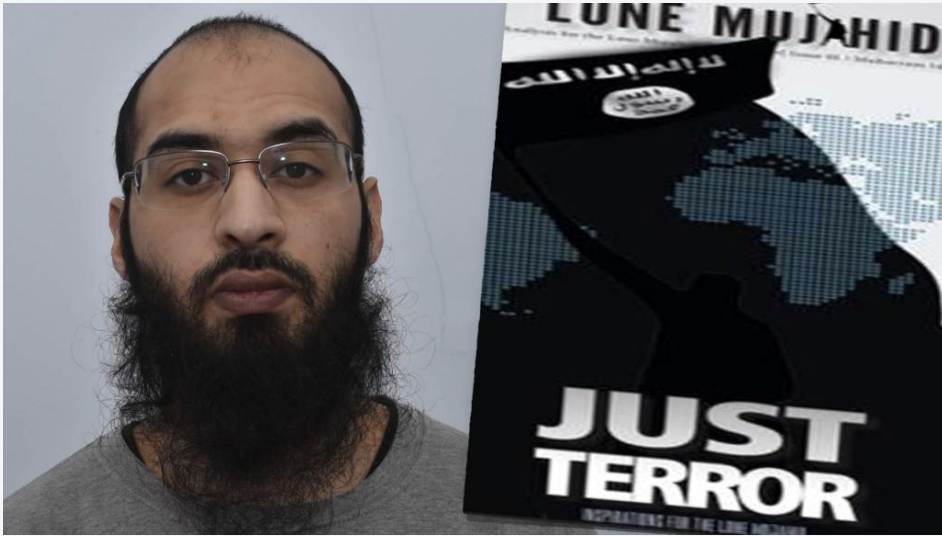
- How do English-speaking online supporters of the Islamic State share instructional material on Telegram, and what types of material are frequently disseminated?
- What can dissemination of instructional material explain about the broader use of Telegram by IS supporters?
- What is the impact of online instructional material on terrorist learning and attack planning?

# The Data

- 98 channels, collected as part of Program on Extremism's "Telegram Tracker" project
- December—June 2017
  - 98.7 members/channel
  - 7,560 photos, 536 videos, 300 audio messages, 8,243 files, and 689 URL links
- Three major categories
  - Explosives construction
  - "Low-tech" attacks
  - Operational and cyber security

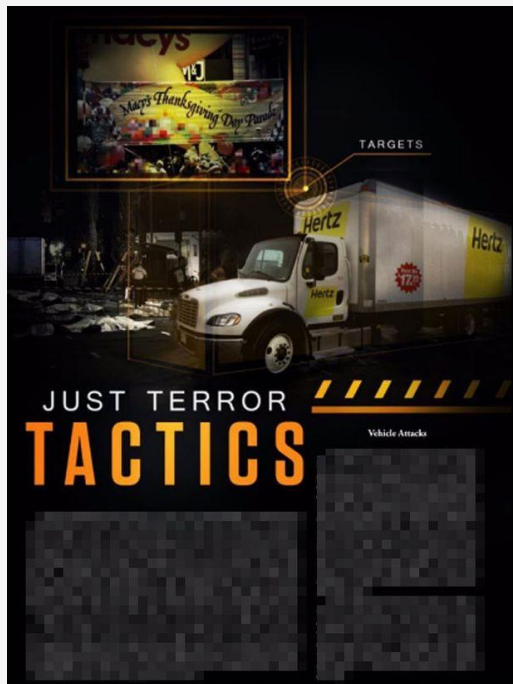


# *Category 1: Explosives*



- information and step-by-step instructions to synthesize explosive material, improvised explosive devices, and instructions for carrying out an attack using explosive devices
- Approximately half (46%) of surveyed channels contained some form of explosives-making instruction
- “Lone Mujahid”
- Reposting of non-IS explosives manuals
  - Jihadi sources
  - Other sources

# Category 2: *Low Tech Attacks*



- information and guidance about conducting attacks that do not require explosive devices (knife attacks, vehicular assaults and rammings, arsons, train derailments, etc.)
- “Just Terror Tactics”+ crowdsourced instructions
  - Operational playbooks
- Recent months: poisons

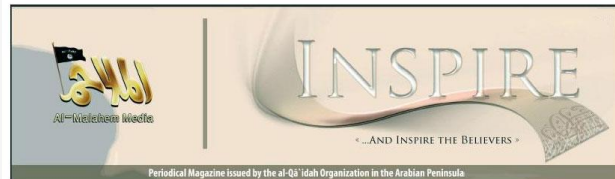
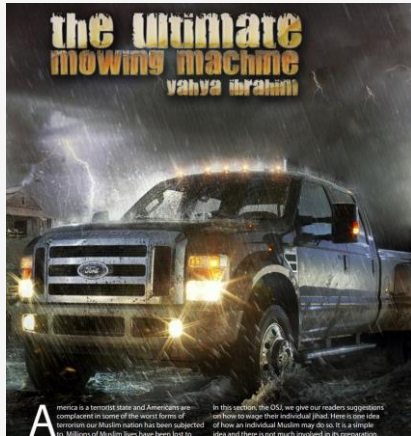
# Category 3: Operational and Cyber Security



- information about avoiding detection while implementing a plot and reducing the risk of apprehension; instructions to avoid monitoring of online activity, including the installation of privacy-maximizing applications and services (virtual private networks, anonymous browsers, 'self-destruct' features, encrypted messaging and e-mail services, etc.)
- 70% of channels posted information on OPSEC or cybersecurity
- Cybersecurity
  - application download links for avoiding detection online (VPNs, anonymous browsers, etc.)
  - Instructions for creating multiple accounts on mainstream social media

# Observation 1: Everything Goes

- English-language, pro-Islamic State Telegram channel administrators post a wide array of instructional material from inside and outside the jihadi movement.
  - Dearth of officially-released IS instructional material in English
  - Surplus of material released by other groups (AQAP)
  - English-speaking jihadist attack planners: *a la carte* approaches to the broader movement



### Make a bomb in the kitchen of your Mom

The AQ Chef

There are two types of explosions:

**First:** Chemical explosion. This explosion causes great pressure that would kill living beings within a certain radius. Examples are all the military grade explosives such as TNT, C4 and RDX.

**Second:** Mechanical explosion. This results from the burning of an inflammable material within a confined space. An example is putting gunpowder inside an iron pipe with a small opening enough only for a fuse. When the gunpowder is ignited, great pressure results from the gunpowder turning into gases and which result in the exploding of the iron pipe, turning it into shrapnel flying at high speed.

#### I. Preparation of the explosive device:

1. Inflammable substance
2. Decoration lamp (what is normally used for Christmas trees)
3. Iron pipe

#### A. Preparation of the inflammable substance

This substance is a mixture of two ingredients:

- The substance found in heads of matches
- Sugar

#### B. How to extract the inflammable substance:

1. Grinding matches
2. Mixing with sugar
3. Sieving
4. Final mixture

Make a bomb in the kitchen of your Mom

The AQ Chef

### How to use Asrar al-Mujahideen: Sending & Receiving Encrypted Messages

Temporist

Sending an important message in the old days only required a piece of paper, a writing utensil, and a trustworthy messenger that knows the location of the party you need to reach. Today, this is still an effective method if such a messenger is available and can get around without anyone stopping him. However, for the most part, this method has slowly evaporated and is now replaced with the internet. Its benefit is that if there is no messenger that exists, access to the other party is only a few clicks of a mouse button away. Its harm is that the spies are actively paying attention to the Emails, especially if you are an individual that is known to be jihad-minded. So how does one go about sending important messages without it being noticed by the enemy? Following is one method and that is by using an encryption software.

One such software is a program created by our brothers called **Asrar al-Mujahideen 2.0**. Here, we will discuss how to use this program, how to create your key, how to send and receive the public key of the other party, and how to check if your version of the software is forfeited or not. There are many things you can do with this program besides sending and receiving encrypted messages; we will cover those aspects in later issue, in *Shah* Allah.

#### I. CREATING YOUR KEY

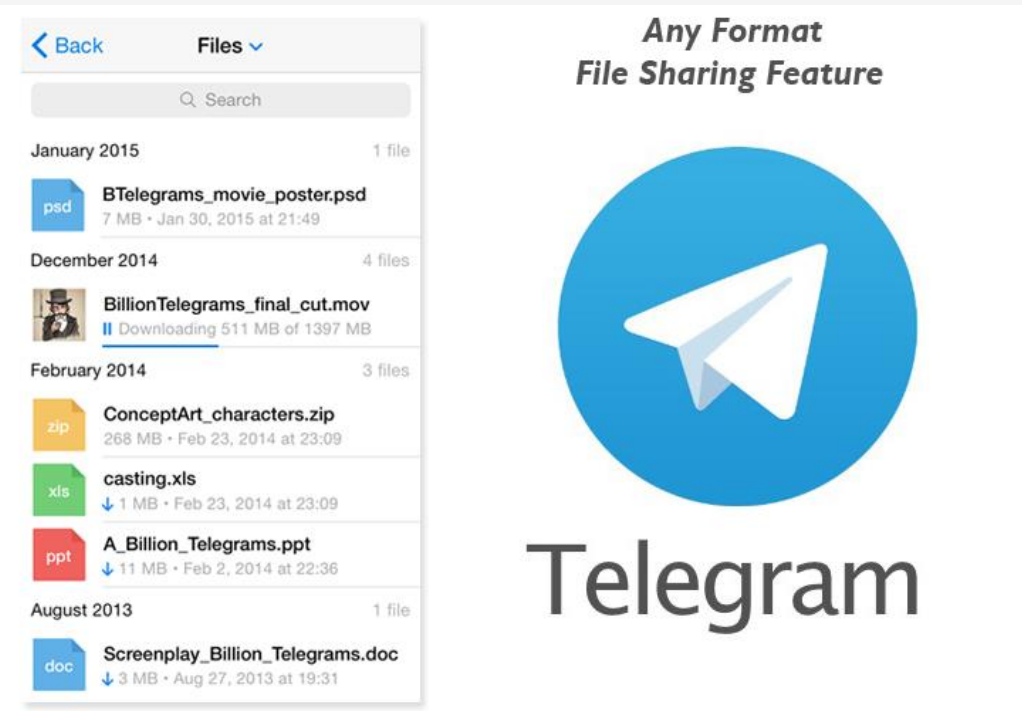
After you download Asrar and open the program, you will see the main interface as is:

The first thing you need to do is create a key for yourself. So go ahead and click on 'Keys Manager' on the left hand side menu. You will get a small pop-up menu looking like the image to the left. Go ahead and click on 'Generate Keys' towards the bottom. You will get a pop-up looking like the image on the right:

## #2: *Filesharing, Filesharing, Filesharing*

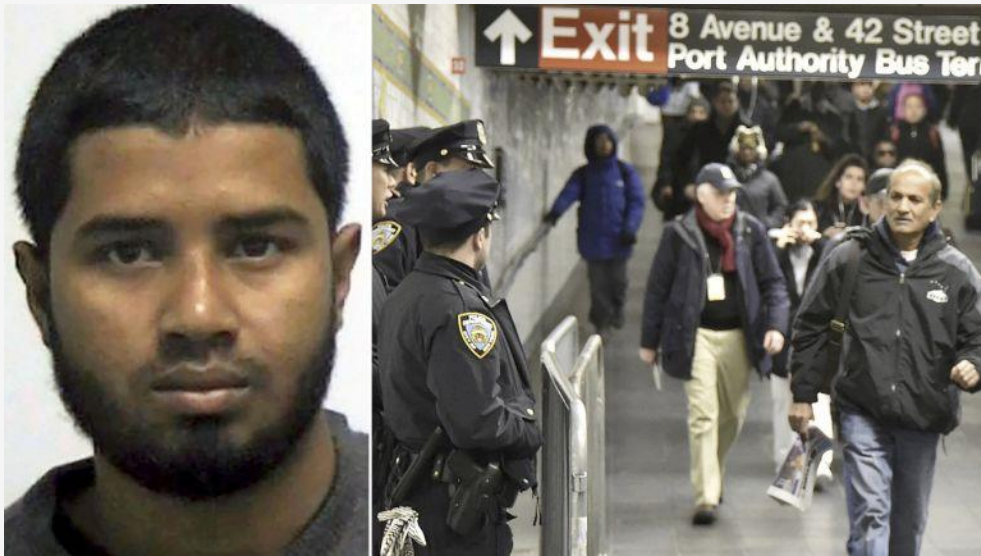
- Telegram has changed the landscape of jihadist instructional material distribution by developing a platform that combines extensive file-sharing capabilities in **multiple file formats with lax regulation.**

- Critical factor in jihadist use of the platform more broadly
- Expansion in size/type of media
- Laissez-faire regulation and the “clearinghouse” factor





# #3: *Impact, Techne, and Metis*



- **Should we be worried about attack-planning instructional material on Telegram?**
  - Yes, with caveats
  - Access to instructions ≠ successful plot
  - Techne/metis
  - TATP/Akayed Ullah
- **OPSEC/cybersecurity manuals- important concern**
  - Easily accessible and implementable
  - Impede law enforcement/intelligence collection
  - Make efforts against ISIS elsewhere online difficult

*Thank you!*

- [bennettclifford@gwu.edu](mailto:bennettclifford@gwu.edu)

