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MailOnline

Thursday, Sep 11th 2014 11PM 73°F 2AM 73°F 5-Day Forecast

CIA now believes the ranks of ISIS fighters have swollen to TRIPLE the number previously thought to as many as 31,500 fighters - and at least 2,000 of them are Westerners

- **A new CIA intelligence assessment estimates ISIS can gather between 20,000 and 21,500 fighters**
- **A previous estimate had put the figure at 10,000**
- **It is thought that 2,000 of that number are from Western countries**

Published: 22:29 EST, 11 September 2014 | Updated: 22:29 EST, 11 September 2014

A CIA spokesman says a new intelligence assessment estimates that the Islamic State group can muster between 20,000 and 31,500 fighters across Iraq and Syria, up from a previous figure of 10,000.

The new assessment is based on a review of intelligence reports from May to August. It is larger than the 20,000 figure being used by many outside experts.

The CIA estimates that 2,000 of those fighters are from Western countries.



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Leader: A man purported to be the reclusive leader of the militant Islamic State Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has made what would be his first public appearance at a mosque in the center of Iraq's second city, Mosul, according to a video recording posted on the Internet on July 5, 2014



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Swollen ranks: A resident of Tabqa city touring the streets on a motorcycle waves an Islamist flag in celebration after Islamic State militants took over Tabqa air base, in nearby Raqqa city August 24, 2014

Previous estimates placed the number of ISIS fighters at 10,000.

'This new total reflects an increase in members because of stronger recruitment since June following battlefield successes and the declaration of a caliphate,' CIA spokesman Todd Ebitz said.

CIA spokesman Ryan Trapani says the new total reflects stronger recruitment by the extremist group since June following battlefield successes and the group's declaration of a caliphate.

He says the revised number also reflects 'greater battlefield activity, and additional intelligence.'

It's not clear where the additional fighters swelling ISIS's ranks are coming from.

According to [CNN](#), more than 15,000 fighters from 80 countries around the world, including 2,000 from the United States, have gone to Syria to join the militants.



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Joined by foreign fighters: A fighter of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS) holds an ISIL flag and a weapon on a street in the city of Mosul, June 23, 2014



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Divergent groups: Iraqi Shiite militia fighters hold the Islamic State flag as they celebrate after breaking the siege of Amerli by Islamic State militants, September 1, 2014

The revised figure comes a day after President Obama outlined his plans to 'dismantle and ultimately destroy' ISIS.

On Wednesday, Obama laid out plans to go after Islamic State militants with possible sustained airstrikes and associated military actions designed to neutralize the foe.

He insisted that despite ISIS declaring a caliphate, controlling large areas in Iraq and Syria and calling itself Islamic State, it is not a legitimate 'state.'

The president wants to train Syrian rebels to serve as ground troops against ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

However, after three years of civil war, there are many diverse groups fighting President Bashar al-Assad - and one other - ranging from moderates to extremists.

'There's a lot of skepticism about this piece of the president's strategy,' Representative Adam B. Schiff, Democrat of California, a member of the House Intelligence Committee told [The New York Times](#). 'The so-called moderate rebels have often been very immoderate and ineffective.'

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[TrashCan](#), Alpine, United States, moments ago

Drone target practice.

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[Ali Rump](#), Auckland, New Zealand, moments ago

Send in ground troops, it's the only way to do the job properly. And yes there will be deaths but this is a war and we don't really have a choice.

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[michael_t](#), Anytown, United States, moments ago

Hope more "Westerners" join them so we can get them all at once.

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[Alan Noel](#), sacramento, United States, moments ago

Their ranks will really swell after we give them that 500 million tax dollars.

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[Stand Strong](#), Newcastle Upon Tyne, United Kingdom, 7 minutes ago

I know this will not get published but the only way to stop this evil regime for recruiting further people is to execute them as soon as they are caught. They do not deserve the right to any legal treatment after the murder and carnage they are spreading around the world. Stop been so soft on them and give them the sentence their crimes warrant DEATH.

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[Billy the Fish](#), York, 8 minutes ago

With over thirty thousand fighters it's a target rich environment!

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[Ericjimbob](#), Tunbridge Wells, UK, 11 minutes ago

CIA always does this - remember Iraq and WMD? They are a political organisation not really a fit for purpose intelligence agency. The US has those but they keep their heads down.

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[Bruce](#), Texas, United States, 16 minutes ago

If you know how many there are then you know WHO they are and WHERE they are. Which means you are reminding us of your inabilities and idiocies. You know who they are but can't capture them? You're a failure.

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[Tom Magee](#), South Florida, United States, 27 minutes ago

Guess ISIS finally made the varsity team. Will President Hussein Obama put on a Ray Rice jersey and go punch them out now?

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[AuntieBea](#), Mayberry, United States, 7 minutes ago

Sure he will... Right after his next golf game.

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[LondonMan](#), London, United Kingdom, 33 minutes ago

O'h well if the CIA says it's true then it must be.

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