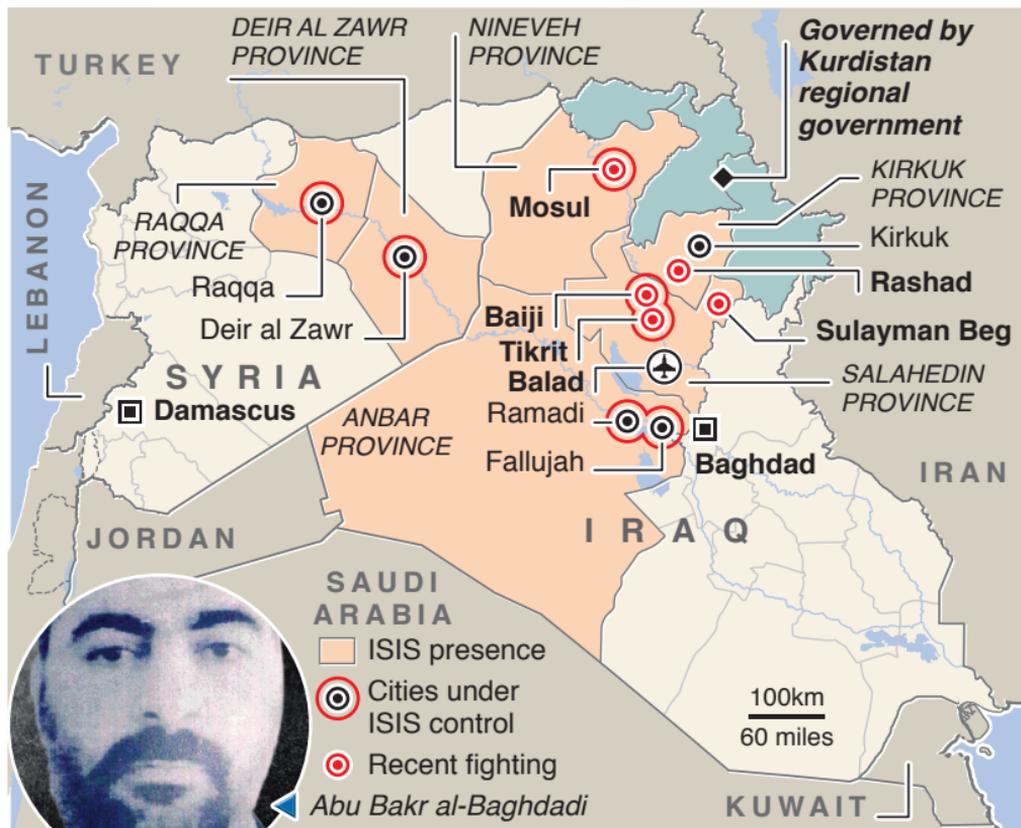


ISIS – Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant



■ **ISIS***: Jihadist group with estimated 11,000 fighters, including 3,000 foreigners

■ **Origin:** Formed in early years of Iraq War under name *Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)*. Known for decapitation videos released on internet

■ **2004:** Leader *Abu Musab al-Zarqawi* pledges allegiance to *Osama bin Laden*. Al-Zarqawi is killed by U.S. forces in 2006

■ **2006-10:** AQI's destructive capability reduced after U.S. troop surge. U.S. and Iraqi forces capture or kill 34 top AQI leaders

■ **2011:** Following departure of U.S. troops, AQI begins bombing campaign. U.S. places \$10 million bounty on leader *Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi*

■ **2012:** AQI launches *Breaking Walls* campaign with over 560 bomb attacks and release of more than 500 inmates from *Abu Ghraib* prison

■ **Apr 2013:** Al-Baghdadi announces merger with Syrian jihadist rebel group, *al-Nusra Front*, to create ISIS. Merger rejected by al-Nusra

■ **2013-14:** ISIS takes control of Syria's Raqqa and Deir al Zawr provinces, beheading rival jihadists

■ **Jan 2014:** ISIS takes control of Fallujah and Ramadi

■ **Feb:** Kills emissary of Al-Qaeda's leader *Ayman al-Zawahiri*

■ **Jun 10:** ISIS captures city of Mosul

■ **Jun 11-13:** Baiji and Tikrit fall to ISIS. Hundreds of U.S. contractors evacuated from Balad airbase

*Final "S" in ISIS stems from Arabic word "al-Sham" which refers to Levant

Sources: Al Monitor, Institute for the Study of War

Picture: Associated Press

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