

Appendix II – the Spillover Dimension

This document is the second appendix to the article “When Conflicts Do Not Overspill: The Case of Jordan.” It presents evidence that the jihadist threat to Jordan is a spillover effect. The appendix also provides measurements on the scope of the different diffusion processes at play.

The growing literature on diffusion shows that social phenomena can spread in different ways and for various reasons.¹ The research focusing on conflict contagion – or violent spillover – has identified several mechanisms through which armed rebels in one country can cause conflict to spread to another.² They include both direct and indirect causal mechanisms. *Learning* and *emulation* are examples of the latter.³ As Solingen emphasizes, these two mechanisms can be challenging to disentangle.⁴ For this appendix, however, such an exercise is unnecessary. It suffices that both *learning* and *emulation* involve a kind of “demonstration effect” whereby rebels in a given country take up arms after being inspired by the example of insurgents abroad.

As for direct causal mechanisms, one example includes what Black refers to as “rebel assistance” whereby “potential rebels in one state [receive help] by active rebels in another state.”⁵ In the context of presenting data on the jihadist threat to Jordan, we refer to this mechanism as “jihadist assistance.” Another mechanism is that returnee foreign fighters with experience from conflicts abroad initiate violence at home.⁶ Refugee flows also increase the risk of conflict contagion. Transnational rebels can exploit such flows as cover to infiltrate countries in the guise of being refugees to spread violence.⁷

As shown below, the threat in the 1990s consisted of returned veterans from the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan. In the 2000s, al-Qaida (and particularly al-Qaida in Iraq under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s

¹ For the standard work on diffusion, see Beth A. Simmons and Zachary Elkins, “The Globalization of Liberalization: Policy Diffusion in the International Political Economy”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 98, No. 1 (2004), pp. 171-189.

² See e.g. Idean Salehyan, *Rebels without Borders: Transnational Insurgencies in World Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2009).

³ Nils W. Metternich, Shahryar Minhas, and Michael D. Ward, “Firewall? Or, Wall on Fire? A Unified Framework of Conflict Contagion and the Role of Ethnic Exclusion”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 61, No. 6 (2017), pp. 1151-1173.

⁴ Etel Solingen, “Of Dominoes and Firewalls: The Domestic, Regional, and Global Politics of International Diffusion”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (2012), p. 634.

⁵ Nathan Black, “The Spread of Violent Civil Conflict: Rare, State-Driven, and Preventable,” Ph.D. dissertation, MIT, 2012, p. 32.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Idean Salehyan and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “Refugees and the Spread of Civil War,” *International Organization*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (2006), pp. 335-336.

leadership) was the primary concern, whereas the Islamic State (IS) has dominated the threat in the 2010s. The main spillover mechanisms at play in the Jordanian case include the following four types:

1. *Inspiration.* Jihadists inspire potential jihadists in a neighboring country to take up arms.
2. *Posing as refugees.* Jihadists posing as refugees infiltrate and spread violence to a neighboring country.
3. *Jihadist assistance.* Jihadists assist domestic jihadists in a neighboring country by sending manpower, weapons, and funds; or by providing training and guidance on armed operations.
4. *Jihadist foreign fighter blowback.* Foreign fighters who have returned/traveled from a conflict zone abroad to initiate violence in Jordan.

The appendix has two parts. The first describes what data the findings are based on and discusses some potential limitations of this data. The last presents the results and demonstrates how the jihadist threat in Jordan has been caused by spillover from (primarily) three conflicts – the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan in the 1980s; the Iraq war in the 2000s; and the Syria war in the 2010s.

Data and limitations

The results presented below are based on data from the chronology in Appendix I.⁸ This chronology includes jihadist plots (launched and foiled attacks) dating back to 1994. It shows that there has been a significant jihadist spillover threat against the kingdom (89 well-documented plots), although the net effect, i.e., the number of launched attacks (15), has been very limited in light of Jordan's proximity to jihadist battle zones. In other words, most of the spillover never materialized into attacks.

There are some possible sources of inaccuracies in the data. A case in point is that the figures presented about spillover type 3 (jihadist assistance) and type 4 (foreign fighter blowback) should be considered conservative estimates. One reason is that the sources sometimes provide vague or limited information about the plotters and their ties to jihadist groups.⁹ Consider, for example, the cell responsible for the Kerak attack in December 2016 in which ten individuals were killed. According

⁸ For more see, "Appendix I: Chronology of Jihadist Plots in Jordan 1994-2018." Replication data can be found in the excel document in Appendix III.

⁹ It is important to note that the sources seldom point out that there has not been rebel assistance or foreign fighter blowback. An exception is the foiled plot referred to as the "Plot against Diplomats in Amman" in 2004 – where a source specifies that this was one of the few cases during the mid-2000s that did not seem directly connected to al-Zarqawi's organization in Iraq. See "Jordan: 2004 Annual Terrorism Report", December 21, 2004, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/04AMMAN10040_a.html. Most of the time, the sources neither provide information that allows us to prove nor provide information that enables us to disprove that spillover type 3 and 4 have been at play. For some examples, see the cases referred to as "Plot to attack American joggers" in 2002, "Plot to attack U.S. and Jordanian targets" in 2009, "Plot to attack foreign officials in Jordan" in 2010, and "Bomb plot against Russian, Israeli and Iranian embassies" in "Appendix I: Chronology of Jihadist Plots in Jordan 1994-2018."

to the Jordanian newspaper *Roya*, the cell's members had been in contact with IS-operatives in Syria.¹⁰ They had told these operatives about their plans so that IS could claim credit after the operation was completed. Given this direct contact, it is not unlikely that the IS-operatives assisted the cell's members in some capacity. However, we still did not code the "Kerak cell" as type 3 (jihadist assistance).¹¹

Relatedly, another reason why these figures should be considered conservative estimates is that we are mainly dealing with very recent events. With regards to foiled terrorist plots, little is typically known about them in the beginning, but then gradually more information emerges. Considering that 45 plots (51%) have occurred since 2014, we expect to learn more about ties between particular cells in Jordan and jihadists abroad as investigations progress and trials are held.

Another potential source of error is selection bias. The results presented in this appendix are only based on the 89 "well-documented" plots in Jordan. The 32 "vague" plots, in which the information surrounding jihadist motive, target and preparations was too incomplete, or there was uncertainty about the reliability of sources, have been excluded. There is a possibility that the inclusion of "vague" cases could have yielded slightly different results. However, it is difficult to say with certainty exactly how this would have affected our findings.

For the cases that have been characterized as "vague" due to the scarcity of information, we simply do not know the spillover dimension. Yet for the cases that have been registered as "vague" because of controversy or uncertainty concerning the reliability of sources, this is not the case. In several of these latter cases, the links to jihadist groups outside Jordan happen to be documented as strong, so if these cases end up being included when more information emerges, it will lead to results that portray a higher degree of involvement than those presented below. A case in point is the case referred to in the chronology of plots as "the Killing of a Jordanian soldier in Ma'an" in 2017. While the Islamic State (IS) claimed that one of its "security detachments" (i.e., members of the group) had carried out the attack, Jordanian authorities denied this claim.¹² We, therefore, chose to categorize

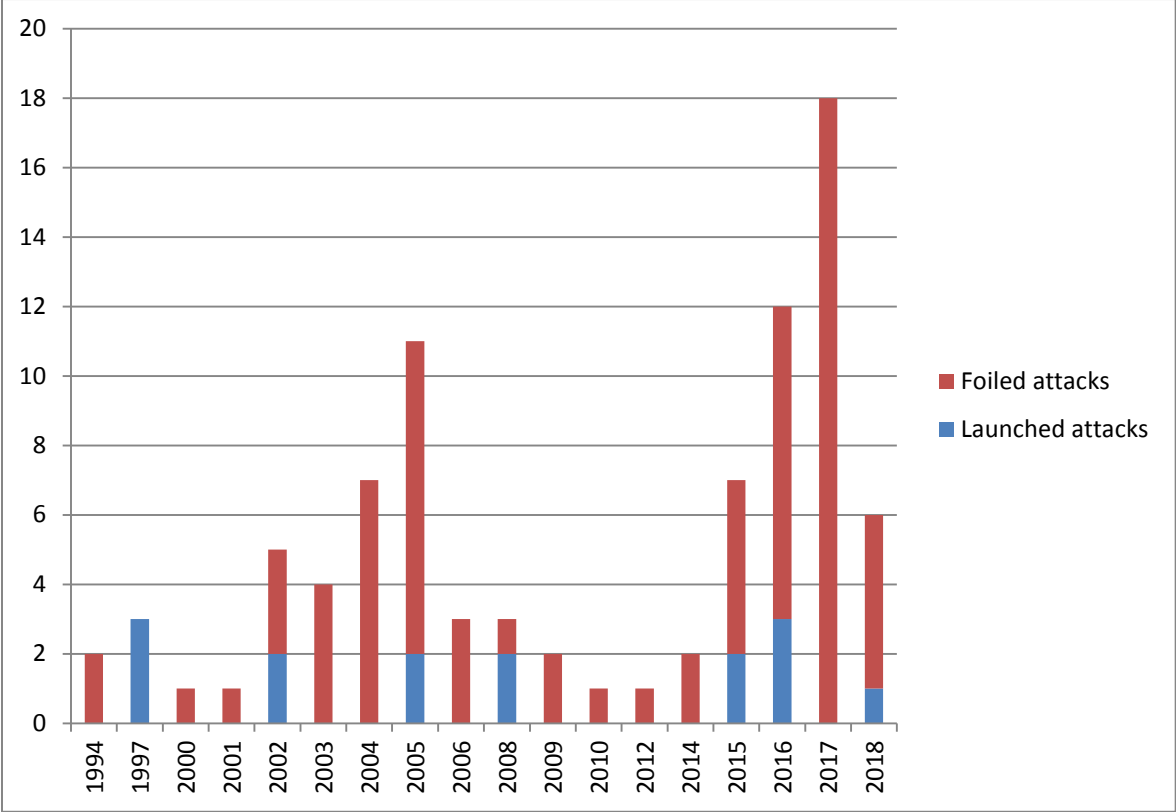
¹⁰ "Al-khaliyya al-'irhābiyya fī al-Karak awqa'ahā "mujaffif sha'r" bi-yad al-'ajhiza al-'amniyya" [The Terrorist Cell in Karak, "A Hair Dryer" Brought it into the Hands of the Security Services], *Roya*, 13 November, 2018, <https://royanews.tv/news/168525>.

¹¹ There are five other similar cases after 2014, where we know for certain that the plotters had been in contact with IS-members in Syria or Iraq. But we have not coded them as spillover type 3 because we do not know for sure if the plotters received any assistance by IS-members abroad. They include the plots referred to as "Eid al-Adha plot," "Plot to attack the security apparatus by IS-supporter," "Single-actor plot by IS-supporter against police," "Single-actor plot to stab guards outside a foreign embassy," and "Single-actor plot against American and Israeli soldiers." For more information, see "Appendix I: Chronology of Jihadist Plots in Jordan 1994-2018."

¹² For IS's claim, see "IS Claims Responsibility for Killing of Jordan Army Officer", *AP*, January 16, 2017, <https://apnews.com/aa67945a8ed04e4baca96aea565e8da7/claims-responsibility-killing-jordan-army-officer>. For the Jordanian authorities' rebuttal, see "Maşdar 'amniyy: mazā'im Dā'ish bi-qatl 'askariyy 'urduniyy

the plot as “vague.” Yet if we moved this case to “well-documented,” it surely would be a clear example of spillover.

Figure 1. Launched vs. Foiled Attacks in Jordan between 1994 and 2018



Results

After making a quantitative assessment of the information and coding for different mechanisms of diffusion, we arrived at the following observations. The first observation is that all jihadist plots in Jordan can be defined as type 1 (inspiration). The jihadist movement is transnational. Jihadists in Jordan support and are inspired by IS and al-Qaida. They follow the guidelines of leaders such as IS’s now-deceased spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani.¹³ They plot attacks in the kingdom on behalf

hadafuhā al-tashwīsh” [Security Source: The Aim of Daesh’s Claims of Killing a Jordanian Soldiers is Distortion], *Al-Bosala*, January 17, 2017, <https://bit.ly/2nBfX1H>.

¹³ A telling example is the cell responsible for the Molotov cocktail attacks in Amman in 2016. According to *Roya*, the cell’s members decided to carry out attacks in Jordan after IS released a speech by al-Adnani in which he calls upon the organization’s supporters to conduct operations in their home countries. See “Al-ḥukm bil-’iḍām wal-’ashghāl mā bayna 10 ilā 15 sana bi-ḥaqq muttahimīn bil-intimā’ li-Dā’ish” [Death Sentence and (Hard) Labor from 10 to 15 Years for Individuals Suspected of Belonging to Daish], *Roya*, May 14, 2018, <http://royanews.tv/news/154982>.

of these groups (often after having been convinced by IS- or al-Qaida operatives outside Jordan that it is legitimate to carry out armed operations inside Jordan).¹⁴

A second observation is that the data show that there have been fewer cases of spillover type 2 (posing as refugees) over time. In the 2000s, (predominately) Iraqi members of al-Qaida in Iraq infiltrated Jordan among the many refugees that entered the country during the war to carry out attacks such as the 2005 Amman hotel bombings. In the aftermath of these bombings, Jordan started vetting young Iraqis more thoroughly to prevent this type of spillover.¹⁵ The data indicate that the Jordanian authorities have learned from this experience in the 2000s. Although there have been concerns that fighters affiliated to IS or al-Qaida would be among the up to 1.3 million¹⁶ Syrian refugees, there are very few examples and only anecdotal indications that such fighters have plotted attacks in the kingdom since the outbreak of the Syria war. For example, in 2016, Jordan foiled a plot by a cell known as the “Syrian-Jordanian IS-cell.” While it is not improbable that the Syrians involved in the plot had entered Jordan as refugees, this is not mentioned explicitly in any of the sources, and, therefore, not coded as “posing as refugees” in the dataset.¹⁷¹⁸ Except for this case, there is little to suggest that Syrians residing in Jordan appear to have plotted attacks inside the kingdom. IS-fighters living in the Syrian refugee camp Rukban near Jordan have carried out attacks against Jordanian border guards. In June 2016, for example, IS claimed a suicide attack on a Jordanian border post close to the camp, which killed seven and injured more than ten others.¹⁹ However, these incidents have not occurred inside Jordan and fall outside the scope of the study (and are, therefore, not included in the dataset).

The third observation is that we have found clear-cut evidence of spillover type 3 (rebel assistance) in as much as 37 plots (42%). As Table 1 shows, rebel assistance has occurred consistently throughout the period under investigation. However, the type of assistance has changed. We describe this in

¹⁴ See e.g. the case referred to as the “Salt-case”. “Al-’ashghāl 10 sanawāt li-7 muttahimīn khaṭṭatū li-tanfīdh ‘amaliyyāt ‘irhābiyya fī al-’urdunn” [Labor 10 Years for 7 Individuals Accused of Planning to carry out Terrorist Operations in Jordan], *Philadelphia News*, June 27, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2N9jfVe>

¹⁵ W. Andrew Terill, “Jordanian National Security and the Future of Middle East Stability” (Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, January 2008), p. 33.

¹⁶ “Jordan cannot take any more Syrian refugees - officials,” *Jordan Times*, June 25, 2018.

¹⁷ “Khaliyya ‘irhābiyya sūriyya-’urduniyya ‘amām maḥkamat ‘amn al-dawla fī al-’urdunn” [Syrian-Jordanian Terrorist Cell in front of the State Security Court in Jordan], *Rai al-Yawm*, July 13, 2017, <http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=708507>.

¹⁸ In fact, because there are so few cases (potentially none) of spillover type 2 (posing as refugees) in the 2010s, we have not included the coding for this type of spillover in the excel document in Appendix III. We surmised it sufficed with this thick description here.

¹⁹ “Jordan: Death Sentence, Life Imprisonment in Rukban Camp’s Case”, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, December 5, 2017. For more on IS’s claim, see “Jaysh al-khilāfa yuhājim qā’ida ‘amrīkiyya dākhl al-’urdunn wa-yūqi’ khasā’ir fī ṣufūf al-murtaddīn wal-ṣalībiyyīn” [The army of the caliphate attacks an American base inside Jordan and inflict casualties on the ranks of the apostates and crusaders], *al-Naba’*, no. 37 (2016): 3, available on file with author.

some more detail below, yet the jihadist threat against Jordan increased significantly when al-Qaida and particularly al-Qaida in Iraq under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's leadership sent attack teams to carry out operations in the kingdom. In the 2010s, there have been few cases where operatives have been sent from Syria or Iraq by IS to orchestrate attacks.²⁰ This way of operating appears to have been replaced to a large extent by "remote controlled" plots – in which IS-operatives based in Syria have directed and financed plots in Jordan from afar. Remote controlled plots have been made possible by new means of communications, such as encrypted apps, which allow "virtual entrepreneurs" instruct attackers directly from afar.²¹ In several such cases in Jordan, the IS-operatives or virtual entrepreneurs sent money or promised to cover the expenses of specific plots.²²

The fourth observation is that returned foreign fighters (i.e., type 4 – foreign fighter blowback) have been involved in 25 plots (28%). The significance of foreign fighter involvement is higher than this figure indicates, however. As Table 1 demonstrates, the share of plots involving returned foreign fighters has decreased in the 2010s. (The main reason for this is that Jordan secured its borders after Jordanian jihadists departed for Syria to join al-Qaida and IS.) Yet Jordanian foreign fighters have been involved in other ways. They have directed plots (remote control) and been essential points of contact – or nodes – between local IS-supporters in Jordan and IS-members in Syria who are responsible for the organization's external operations.²³ Moreover, in as much as ten cases (22% of cases since 2014), some of the plotters had wanted to join IS as foreign fighters, but were unable to do so because of the Jordanian government's countermeasures. It was only after they realized they could not join IS abroad that they started plotting attacks on behalf of the group in Jordan. This shows that foreign fighting influences the threat situation even when they are not able to return or travel in the first place.

The last observation and another clear indication that the threat is a spillover problem is that increases in jihadist plot frequency in Jordan have coincided with armed conflicts in neighboring Iraq and Syria, respectively in 2004–05 for Iraq and 2014–18 for Syria (see Figure 1 above). Before this, the earliest incidents of jihadist terrorist activity in the kingdom also had a link to foreign conflict, in

²⁰ Exceptions might be the foiled plots, which we refer to as the "Second 9/11 plot" in 2012 and the "Irbid Cell" in 2016.

²¹ This mode of operation, i.e., the "remote control" of plots has also increased western countries. See e.g. Thomas Hegghammer and Petter Nesser, "Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West", *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (2015): 21-24; and Alexander M. Hitchens and Seamus Hughes, "The Threat to the United States from the Islamic State's Virtual Entrepreneurs," *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 3 (2017): 1-8.

²² See e.g. "Al-tafāṣīl al-kāmila li-tanfīdh 'amaliyya 'irhābiyya 'alā al-sāḥa al-'urduniyya" [The Full Details of the (Planned) Terrorist Operation on the Jordanian Scene], *Al-Ray*, July 15, 2017, <https://bit.ly/2uoQZrj>.

²³ See e.g. "'ihbāt mukhaṭṭat 'irhābiyy li-Dā'ish istahdafa junūdan 'urdunniyyan - tafāṣīl" [The Disruption of an IS-terrorist Plot which Targeted Jordanian Soldiers – Details], *Al-Ray*, February 1, 2016, <http://alrai.com/article/765451.html>.

the sense that their perpetrators had spent time in Afghanistan as foreign fighters before returning to Jordan in the early 1990s. Accordingly, the observed instances of jihadist spillover into Jordan can be divided into three phases: 1) the Afghanistan phase from 1994 to 2001; 2) the Iraq phase from 2002 to 2010; and 3) the Syria phase from 2011 onwards. Table 1, below, illustrates the involvement, respectively, of jihadists operating abroad and returnee fighters in terrorist plotting inside Jordan.

Table 1. Involvement of Jihadists in Other Countries, and of Returnee Jihadist Fighters, in Terrorist Plots in Jordan, 1994–2018

Phase	Involved assistance from jihadists operating outside Jordan	Involved returnee fighters from foreign conflicts
Afghanistan (1994–2001)	71% of plots	86% of plots
Iraq (2002–10)	44% of plots	42% of plots
Syria (2011–18)	35% of plots	9% of plots

The Afghanistan Phase, 1994–2001

We found seven well-documented plots for the period 1994–2001. Returned foreign fighters were involved in nearly all of them.²⁴ Three plots materialized into attacks, but these were minor incidents and did not result in casualties. Reportedly, all were carried out by a group known as *al-Islah wal-Tahaddi* (“the Reform and Challenge Group”). Except for the foiled al-Qaida-connected “Millennium plot” in 1999–2000, in which several plotters had trained in Afghanistan, the jihadist plots in Jordan were relatively simple and unsophisticated during this period.²⁵

The Iraq Phase, 2002²⁶–10

As Figure 1 shows, the number of jihadist plots in Jordan increased in the early 2000s, reaching an unprecedented level in 2004 and 2005 with seven and 11 well-documented plots, respectively. Subsequently, the frequency of plots decreased, but there were still 36 well-documented plots of varying scope for the entire 2002–10 period. However, only six of these materialized into attacks, as Jordanian authorities were able to disrupt a much larger share of plots than before (83 percent in 2002–10 versus 57 percent in 1994–2001). In the early 2000s, the planning of jihadist operations became more sophisticated than it had previously been, mainly because of the activities of al-Zarqawi in Iraq. His group dispatched attack teams to Jordan to conduct operations. Between 2002 and al-Zarqawi’s death in 2006, attack teams connected to al-Qaida in Iraq were responsible for at

²⁴ Two of the plots we registered in this period were by a group known as Bay’at al-Imam. This group’s activities have been the subject of debate. According to Joas Wagemakers, one cannot be certain that there were any plots linked to the group at all. See Joas Wagemakers, “A Terrorist Organization that Never Was: The Jordanian “Bay’at al-Imam” Group,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (2014), pp. 59–75.

²⁵ For information on the Millennium Plot, see “Dissecting a Terror Plot from Boston to Amman,” *New York Times*, January 15, 2001.

²⁶ Although the war in Iraq did not begin until 2003, we included 2002 in the Iraqi phase. The reason is that the first plot in Jordan linked to al-Zarqawi’s group in Iraq occurred in 2002.

least ten plots in the kingdom. These often involved both Jordanians and non-Jordanians. The most well-known attack occurred in Amman in 2005, when three coordinated suicide bombings on hotels in the capital killed 60 civilians; this remains the deadliest jihadist attack in Jordan's history.²⁷

The Syria Phase, 2011–18

After several years in which the frequency of recorded plots was low, the number of plots increased again after the outbreak of civil war in Syria and Iraq and the establishment of IS in 2014. Since then, there have been 46 well-documented plots in Jordan. One foiled plot in 2016 was linked to al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). It involved plans for three coordinated attacks against Jordanian security forces and tourists in downtown Amman.²⁸ Notwithstanding the ambition of this AQAP plot, it is IS rather than al-Qaida that has posed the main threat to the kingdom of late. 45 of 46 plots since 2011 have been linked to the organization and its predecessor, al-Qaida in Iraq. However, whereas al-Qaida in Iraq was able to send operatives from Iraq to carry out attacks in Jordan in the early 2000s, there seem to have been few cases in which IS-operatives have traveled from conflict zones to Jordan to stage attacks.²⁹ Due to Jordanian countermeasures such as stricter border control (which we explore in detail in the article's main body of text), IS has mainly had to rely on supporters inside the kingdom to carry out attacks. A recurrent pattern is that Jordanian jihadists have received instructions from IS members abroad (13 plots – 30% of the 44 IS-connected cases since 2014). Usually, these foreign-based instructors have convinced Jordanian jihadists to carry out attacks in their home country, advising them via social media platforms such as WhatsApp.³⁰

As was the case during the Iraq phase of transnational jihadism in Jordan, some of the plots since 2011 have been large-scale in nature. One example was an IS-connected plot, uncovered in January 2018, to carry out a series of attacks against multiple targets that included a nightclub in Amman, the U.S. embassy, a church, and Israeli businessmen.³¹ The number of attacks actually launched has

²⁷ There was supposed to be a fourth suicide attack as well, but the attacker, Sajida al-Rishawi, failed to detonate her bomb.

²⁸ "Three Sentenced to Life for Plotting Terror Attacks," *Jordan Times*, April 12, 2017.

²⁹ As mentioned above, exceptions include the plots we refer to as the "Second 9/11 plot" in 2012, the "Irbid Cell" in 2016, as well as the "Terrorist plot by Yemeni IS-member" in 2015. For more information, see "Appendix I: Chronology of Jihadist Plots in Jordan 1994-2018."

³⁰ For examples of such communication, see "Khaliyya irhabiyya suriyya-urduniyya amam mahkamat amn al-dawla fi al-Urdunn" [Syrian-Jordanian terrorist cell before the State Security Court in Jordan], *Ray al-Yawm*, July 13, 2017; "Bad muhakamat unsurayin min daish khattata li-amal irhabiyya" [The prosecution of two IS-members planning terrorist operations begins], Petra News Agency, July 19, 2017.

³¹ "Defendants in Major Terror Trial Plead Not Guilty," *Jordan Times*, April 2, 2018.

remained low, however, with only six incidents recorded in the dataset.³² Jordanian security services have successfully thwarted the vast majority of plots (87 percent).

³² The Kerak attack in 2016 was the only large-scale attack during the period. For more information, see Appendix I and III.