



WATCHLINE



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ISIS Attacks on Christians Continue – A bus carrying Coptic Christians in central Egypt was [attacked](#) by gunmen killing at least 29 people, including at least one man [from](#) Illinois, and wounding 25 others. ISIS has [claimed](#) responsibility for the slaughter as they follow up on recent [threats](#) made against Coptic Christians in Egypt. Witnesses of the attack [stated](#) between eight and 10 gunmen wearing military uniforms attacked the bus. The Christian men ordered off the bus were told their lives would be spared if they [converted](#) to Islam; they refused. Children were also among the victims after [refusing](#) to renounce their faith. It was the fourth assault targeting Christians since December. ISIS [claimed](#) all of these attacks, having killed more than 100 people total.



Assessment: ISIS is attacking Christians around the world. In the Philippines, ISIS-linked militants are [holding](#) a priest and possibly up to 200 people hostage, including children. A video has [surfaced](#) of the catholic priest pleading with the Philippine government to remove its forces from the city of Marawi, where Maute fighters still hold pockets of territory after a week of gun battles against the Philippine army. These attacks [include](#) foreign fighters and local gunmen who want to establish a branch of ISIS in the region. If and when these foreign fighters eventually return home to their native lands is a cause for great concern to homeland security for any of those respective nations.

ISIS Leads Ramadan “War” With Baghdad Bombs – Three days after calling on supporter to wage “all-out war” on the West, and other areas, at the outset of Ramadan, Islamic State used the beginning of the 30-day period of prayer and fasting as the nucleus for twin bombings in Baghdad, which killed a total of 31 and injured scores. The first attack took place after midnight on Monday when a car bomb exploded near a popular ice cream shop as many gathered—including children—to break the day’s fast, and the second came hours later near the Public Pension Office in the busy Shawaka district. In a statement released on YouTube on Friday, ISIS repeated previous incitements for followers who were unable to travel to Syria/Iraq to [attack infidels in the West](#), “in their homes, their markets, their roads, and their forums.”

Assessment: The ice cream shop attack took place in the upscale, primarily Shia, Karrada district, the site of a massive truck bomb during Ramadan in 2016, which killed over 300 people. The attack exploited Ramadan tradition, as it is well known that the shop would be crowded as families break the fast in the evening. Fueled by [militarized interpretations](#), Islamic State fighters who feel justified in destroying families dutifully observing their version of Islam are clearly unbound in their jihad and will take any advantage, however heartless. Law enforcement officers understand the concept of *crimes of opportunity*; all responders should be wary of *terrorism of opportunity*.

Two Killed Defending Young Girls from White Supremacist – A white supremacist stabbed three men—killing two of them—as they came to the aid of two young Muslim girls who were subjected to the man’s angry and menacing rants on a MAX train in Portland, Ore. on Friday afternoon. According to witnesses, the 35-year-old became enraged when two teenage African-American girls, one wearing a hijab, boarded the train, and launched into a racially- and religiously-centered verbal assault. When three men on the train intervened, he attacked them with a knife, killing a 53- and 23-year-old, and narrowly missing a 21-year-old’s jugular vein with a slash to the neck. When police met the train they both attended to the stabbing victims and caught the assailant who fled on foot. In court on Tuesday, the man was defiant, claiming his violence was “patriotism” rather than “terrorism.”

Assessment: Despite Portland’s and the region’s reputation as socially progressive, it has a long history of activity, often violent, associated with white supremacism, which Portland State University urban studies professor [Karen Gibson](#) calls a “dark, hidden secret about racism.” There have been recent rallies inciting such hate, including one in April where the perpetrator was caught on camera draped in an American flag while wielding a baseball bat. Two upcoming rallies in Portland have been cancelled, including one for June 10 opposing Sharia law.



Kabul’s Diplomatic Zone Bombed, at Least 90 Dead – The Green Zone of Kabul, a high security district in Afghanistan’s capital that includes many Western diplomatic missions, was targeted by a massive bomb, disguised in a water delivery truck, which detonated near the German embassy and the Afghan presidential palace, killing nearly 100 people and wounding 300-400 other. The blast occurred during morning rush hour as many Afghans were commuting to work and children were heading to school.

Assessment: Most security experts point to the Taliban, but they have denied responsibly, which they usually when civilian casualties are high, [WSJ said](#). ISIS had not claimed credit, but they are active in the country, and another culprit is the Haqqani network, the criminal-terror group in the region. The Green Zone also includes the U.S. embassy and the U.S. military headquarters in Afghanistan. The attack shows that high security, high threat areas are not invulnerable to attack.

NOAA Predicts Above Average Hurricane Season – The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has [predicted](#) another above-normal hurricane season for the Atlantic Ocean in 2017, which always runs from June 1 through November 30. There is [currently](#) a 45-percent chance of an above-normal season, a 35 percent chance of a near-normal season, and only a 20 percent chance of a below-normal season. NOAA is [predicting](#) a 70-percent chance of 11 to 17 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher), with five to nine becoming hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including two to four major hurricanes (Category 3, 4 or 5; winds of 111 mph or higher). An average season produces 12 named storms, and of those, six hurricanes and three of those elevating to major hurricanes.

Assessment: These numbers [include](#) Tropical Storm Arlene, a rare pre-season storm that formed over the eastern Atlantic in April. NOAA’s new GOES-16 [satellite](#) will provide forecasters with greater image resolution and new technology allowing for more accurate forecasts. These predictions offer a guide for emergency managers, first responders, and the public to appropriately prepare for impending storms. Members must know local evacuation routes and communication practices in order to ensure the safety of the public as well as other homeland security agencies.

Conch Shells Inspire New Helmet Design – As part of a project to build better headgear and body armor, a team of MIT researchers are looking to [conch shells](#) for inspiration. Built to withstand the punishing conditions along rocky shorelines during tidal fluctuations and storms, as well as “sharp-toothed predators,” the scientists found that the conch shell is most resilient, and they are successfully reverse engineering its structure. The “architecture” of the conch shell, which makes it ten times stronger than mother of pearl (nacre) and better allows for impacts to disperse, is characterized a by three-tier system of zigzags and crisscrosses that halt cracks. 3-D printing and modern measuring devices have allowed this research to advance.



Assessment: Many times, research geared towards improvements in military safety gear is passed on to the response community. These studies may ultimately influence firefighter helmet design in the future, where strength, durability, and force impact dispersal are key elements. As active-shooter attacks become more common, firefighters and medical personnel, as part of rescue task forces, will benefit as much as law enforcement with advancements in ballistic protection.

Note: It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Firefighter Raymond Pfeifer, who succumbed to cancer after an eight-year battle. Ray, who served 29 years with FDNY and worked his entire career in Engine Co. 40 in Manhattan, which suffered heavy losses on 9/11. He was a founding member of CTD, where Watchline is produced, and his irreplaceable brand of friendship and leadership will be missed. (View coverage from [NYT](#) and [Fox News](#).)

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