

Western Foreign Fighters in Syria: Implications for U.S. CVE Efforts

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Brief Analysis

Part of a series: [Counterterrorism Lecture Series \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/counterterrorism-lecture-series\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/counterterrorism-lecture-series)

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Deputy Chief Zafar, a top official in the intelligence community's efforts to counter violent extremism, addressed a Policy Forum at The Washington Institute.

In Syria's ongoing civil war, foreign fighters from Western countries are increasingly becoming a concern for their governments. Around fifty Americans have reportedly gone to Syria, where they are gaining combat experience and further exposure to radicalization. When these and other Western fighters return to their home countries, they are in a prime position to spread their ideology and carry out attacks, creating serious challenges for domestic efforts to counter violent extremism (CVE). Meanwhile, al-Qaeda affiliates in Syria aspire to attack the United States and therefore view Western fighters as full of potential.

To discuss the implications of this trend for CVE strategy and tactics, The Washington Institute hosted a Policy Forum with Shaarik Zafar of the National Counterterrorism Center.

[Download a PDF of Deputy Chief Zafar's prepared remarks. \(/media/2813\)](/media/2813)

Shaarik H. Zafar is deputy chief of the Homeland, Cyber, and Countering Violent Extremism Group in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, National Counterterrorism Center. He has also served as a director for global engagement on the White House National Security Staff and a senior policy advisor in the Department of Homeland Security's Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. ❖

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