

FUNDING ISIS

The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) is the world's best-funded terrorist group and is richer than some small countries. How does ISIS, now controlling territory in Syria and Iraq, fill its coffers?



Independently Wealthy

Unlike other groups, which rely on state sponsors, major donors, or abuse of charity, ISIS is financially independent due to its successful criminal enterprise.



An Illegal "Inheritance"

Then known as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the group brought in some \$70 million a year through criminal activities—and was so flush that central al-Qaeda asked the group for money in 2005.



Growing the Business

ISIS continues to engage in activities such as smuggling, extortion, and crime. Not being tied to major donors has helped the group evade counter-terrorism finance measures.



Private Gulf Donations

Private contributions to ISIS—as well as to other groups operating in Syria, such as al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra—are a concern for U.S. policymakers. Wealthy citizens and others in the Persian Gulf countries have funneled hundreds of millions into the conflict.



U.S. Response

Washington can tighten counter-terrorism financing cooperation with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, but significantly undermining ISIS's financial base would now require rolling back its access to local Syrian and Iraqi income sources.

ENTERPRISING CRIMINALS

» Extortion

ISIS levies around \$8 million per month in "taxes" on local businesses

» Kidnapping

» Robberies

The seizure of Mosul's central bank netted tens of millions of dollars

» Counterfeiting

» Smuggling

Oil, weapons, and antiquities

» Racketeering

Sources

- » Declaring an Islamic State, Running a Criminal Enterprise
- » Qatar and ISIS Funding: The U.S. Approach
- » Saudi Funding of ISIS
- » The Terrorist Funding Disconnect with Qatar and Kuwait

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ALL IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD: GULF FUNDING

