

Al-Qaida Breakaway Pursuing An Islamic State

BY RYAN LUCAS
Associated Press

BEIRUT — An al-Qaida splinter group that has seized a huge chunk of northern Iraq commands as many as 10,000 fighters and has steadily been consolidating its hold on much of northeastern Syria across the border. Its pursuit of an Islamic state that would straddle the two countries has thrown it into bloody conflict with both governments, Kurdish militias and Syrian rebels of all stripes. The group, known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, has employed a calculated strategy to achieve its aims, using everything from beheadings to terrify opponents to ice cream socials for children to curry favor with local populations under its control.

But it is the group's military prowess that has brought under its sway a swath of territory that stretches from the Syrian-Turkish frontier in the north down the Euphrates River all the way to the Iraqi city of Fallujah just 65 kilometers (40 miles) west of Baghdad.

This week, the group's fighters, many of them in fast-moving pickup trucks mounted with machine guns, captured Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, before barreling south to take the city of Tikrit — two urban centers in the heartland of northern Iraq's oil industry.

The Islamic State is the latest and most powerful incarnation of what began as an al-Qaida affiliate in Iraq following the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. American forces spent years and enormous resources to bring the group largely to heel before U.S. troops pulled out of the country in December of 2011.

Since then, the region has been convulsed in political turmoil and sectarian hatreds. The Islamic State has seized on those Sunni-Shiite tensions to help whip up its Sunni extremist followers.

The group is led by an ambitious Iraqi militant known by his nom de guerre of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi with a \$10 million U.S. bounty on his head. After taking the reins in 2010,

al-Baghdadi successfully transformed what had been an umbrella organization focused mainly on Iraq into a transnational military force.

The Syrian uprising, which began in 2011 against President Bashar Assad, opened the door to his greater ambitions. Al-Baghdadi dispatched trusted militants to Syria to set up a group called the Nusra Front while he personally remained in Iraq, according to an audio recording later released by the Nusra Front's commander.

In the spring of 2013, al-Baghdadi's fighters moved from Iraq into northern and eastern Syria. He proclaimed that his group would lead the jihadi cause in both countries. Al-Baghdadi reportedly moved to Syria to manage affairs.

Initially, more moderate Syrian rebels welcomed the group's experienced fighters. But the Islamic State alienated many rebels and Syrian civilians alike with its brutality and attempts to impose its strict interpretation of Islam.

It also drew the ire of many opposition fighters by focusing not on the fight against Assad, but rather on restoring a medieval Islamic state, or caliphate, in Iraq and Greater Syria, also known as the Levant — traditional names that refer to a region stretching from southern Turkey to Egypt on the eastern Mediterranean. The group is also referred to sometimes as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

Eventually, the Islamic State's presence in Syria proved so destabilizing that it fell out with its sister group, the Nusra Front. Their mutual patron at the time, al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahri, formally disavowed the Islamic State in February.

At the same time, other Syrian rebel factions were waging an offensive against the extremist group. Activists say that fighting, which is still going on, has killed more than 6,000 people.

But al-Baghdadi's refusal to bow won him the loyalty of many of the most hard-line fighters in Syria, particularly foreigners, and his group has proven resilient. It now controls much

of northern and eastern Syria from its stronghold of Raqqa, and has routed the Iraqi security forces across the border as well.

The Islamic State commands between 7,000 and 10,000 fighters, according to U.S. intelligence officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to brief the media.

Aymenn al-Tamimi, an expert on militant factions in Syria and Iraq, also put the group's fighting force at about 10,000, including veteran jihadi fighters from Iraq, the Gulf, North Africa and Europe. The Islamic State also relies on thousands of supporters to provide the public services expected of a "state," he said.

The foreigners' roles vary. Some, including Germans and Frenchmen, have carried out suicide bombings. Others, however, hold leadership positions. One of the most prominent commanders in Syria is an imposing ethnic Chechen with a flowing red beard who goes by the name of Omar al-Shishani.

The Islamic State has crafted its tactics and message to best meet local considerations.

"In Iraq, they portray themselves as the protectors of the Sunni community," al-Tamimi said. "In Syria, they are much more open about their ideology and project."

In the Syrian city of Raqqa, their strict brand of Islamic law holds sway. Activists and residents say music has been banned, Christians have to pay an Islamic tax for protection and people are executed in the main square.

In the Iraqi city of Fallujah, however, residents say the group has so far taken a more moderate approach, choosing to overlook some practices it considers forbidden.

The makeup of its forces also varies to a degree. In Syria, foreigners play a larger role than in Iraq, where locals tend to dominate.

The group has been able to do this, in part, because of the simmering anger in Iraq's Sunni minority community toward Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. They accuse al-Maliki of treating them as second-class citizens.

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purposes at the Office of the State Engineer, Joe Foss Building, 523 East Capitol Avenue, Pierre, South Dakota 57501-3182. Anyone requesting, reviewing, or copying Plans and Specifications for this project (such individual is hereinafter referred to as "bidder") agrees that they are doing so for the sole purpose of submitting a bid on the project. In consideration of the State of South Dakota providing such Plans and Specifications for the purpose of preparing a bid, bidder further agrees:

A. The Plans and Specifications are the sole property of the State; B. Any copies of the Plans and Specifications obtained directly from the State will be returned to the office of Geotek Engineering immediately after the State provides notice that bidder will not be awarded a contract, or thirty (30) days after the bid opening for the project, whichever occurs first;

C. Any copies of the Plans and Specifications made by the bidder will be destroyed immediately after the State provides notice that bidder will not be awarded a contract, or thirty (30) days after the bid opening for the project, whichever occurs first;

D. If bidder does not submit a bid, bidder will fulfill the requirements of B and C above on or before the date of the bid opening;

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Should bidder be awarded a contract for construction of the project, bidder does not need to return or destroy plans and specifications until after completion of the project.

Each bid in excess of \$50,000.00 must be accompanied by a certified check, cashier's check or draft in the amount of 5% of the base bid and all add alternates and drawn on a State or National Bank or a 10% bid bond issued by a surety authorized to do business in the State of South Dakota and made payable to the Department of Social Services of the State of South Dakota.

The Department of Social Services reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any irregularities therein.

KRISTI HONEYWELL, P.E.
State Engineer
Office of the State Engineer

Published at the total approximate cost of \$47.82.

6+6+12 Invitation To Bid

Sealed bids will be received by the State Engineer on behalf of the Department of Social Services at the Office of the State Engineer, Joe Foss Building, 523 East Capitol, Pierre, South Dakota 57501-3182 until June 19, 2014, 2:00 PM CT for New Roads, Sidewalk, and Lighting, Human Services Center, Yankton, SD, OSE # H1313-05X/HSMR.

Combined Bids will be received to provide new concrete roads and sidewalks with LED roadway lighting and landscaping at the Human Services Center Campus in Yankton, including all necessary Demolition, General, Mechanical, and Electrical work.

Contractors Please Note: A pre-bid meeting will be conducted at the Human Services Center on June 17, 2014 at 10:00 AM CT. Meet at the project office of Larry Lanning (south side of the boiler plant), 605.661.8584. Attendance at this meeting is optional, but is strongly recommended as this will be bidders' only opportunity to view the project with Owner and Designer present for questions.

Copies of the Plans and Specifications may be obtained by bidders at the office of Stockwell Engineers, 600 North Main Avenue, Suite 100, Sioux Falls, SD, 57104, 605.338.6668. Copies are on file for viewing purposes at the Office of the State Engineer, Joe Foss Building, 523 East Capitol Avenue, Pierre, South Dakota 57501-3182. Anyone requesting, reviewing, or copying Plans and Specifications for this project (such individual is hereinafter referred to as "bidder") agrees that they are doing so for the sole purpose of submitting a bid on the project. In consideration of the State of South Dakota providing such Plans and Specifications for the purpose of preparing a bid, bidder further agrees:

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Published at the total approximate cost of \$49.15.

FCS

From Page 1

The new facility, which will be located at 3808 Broadway Avenue, will feature a one-level, "prairie-style" layout, Connot said. The U-shaped building will have upgrades in technology, a "false floor" to allow for future modifications and patio facilities for events.

"It's an environment that will be conducive to both attracting good employees and our customers coming in to do business," he said.

Connot said the current Yankton office, which was built in 1978, has served FCS America well, but an upgrade is needed to fit the business' future plans.

"We've retrofit that building, and it's worked, but as things continue to change and continue to grow, the space there isn't as flexible," he said.

That building will be sold once the new retail office is finished.

Construction on the facility north of Yankton is expected to begin in July, Connot said. Since the bidding process was just finalized, final cost numbers were not available Wednesday, he said.

The project is expected to be completed by September 2015.

"Right after that, we'll invite people up for an open house to take a look," Connot said.

You can follow Derek Bartos on Twitter at twitter.com/d_bartos. Discuss this story at yankton.net/.

Faith

From Page 1

Avera Sacred Heart Hospital. "Therefore, there is a great reluctance to explore it, because people believe it will cause them to abandon their faith. There is a lot of fear. To be clear, Buddhism is not a religion. It doesn't deal with whether there is a god or not."

He describes Buddhism as more of a science of the mind. Meditation is a tool for contemplative thought — silent prayer, perhaps — that can help unlock parts of the brain.

"I've tried to help people learn mindfulness meditation — to become aware that they have within them this consciousness that is non-judgmental, open and a vast part of them. People walk around and are not aware of it. They don't have a practice to engage it."

When people seek what is

truest in our own religious tradition, McVay said he has learned they find they are one with those who are seeking what is truest in other traditions.

"I think it's important to know your own faith clearly and deeply, and then you can start exploring how you are similar to someone else," said McVay, who attends Christ Episcopal Church.

The session on Saturday will open with meditation. Participants will then watch a class on the first two Noble Truths as taught by author, therapist and former Trappist monk, Dr. James Finley. Those truths are a recognition that suffering exists and an identification of its causes.

The video is followed by group discussion of a series of questions raised by the teachings.

"A criticism of Buddhism is that it is morbid because it looks at suffering," McVay said. "The beauty of Buddhist teaching is that, the more one looks at suffering and what causes it, we can

become liberated from it. "I saw the suffering of people as a physician," he continued. "What made it worse is what people thought about it. I could see two people with the same cardiac issue. The people who were hostile and angry about what happened to them never did as well as the people who were a lot more accepting."

Pearson said that with technology making information more readily available, contemplative thought seems as necessary as ever.

"We've never had better access to this revelation of life and the teachings from different cultures," he stated. "We've never been more interconnected. At the same time, we're not present. People are staring into their phones."

This insulation plays itself out in the polarization of politics and religion, McVay said.

"It's a hope for me that we can learn to understand one another and that we're all inter-related," he stated.

Rodeo

From Page 1

so we draw from a good five-state area (outside of South Dakota). A lot of them come back year after year."

This year's rodeo will feature a wide range of competitive events, Marcotte said.

"We've got the full amount of things," he said. "We've got events like mutton busting, bull riding, bareback riding and saddle bronc riding."

On rodeo weekend, action begins at 7 p.m. Friday and 6 p.m. Saturday, with the slack round starting at 9 a.m. Saturday.

Announcers will keep the rodeo fans informed about the riders and events. Besides the action in the ring,

the Irene rodeo will also offer other activities.

"We have free wagons rides, and we have the candy toss for the kids," he said. "We also have time for the kids to meet the (rodeo) clown."

But first, volunteers are sprucing up the grounds for the influx of riders and fans, Marcotte said.

"We've got people who are painting fences and mowing, and we're putting some new fencing in our holding pens," he said. "We're also having a meeting to go over some last-minute details. There's always something going on."

The Irene Rodeo Association works to make continual upgrades to the rodeo grounds, Marcotte said. The improved facilities not only enhance the competitive environment for riders but also benefit fans and give the

rodeo a more permanent feel for its home.

"We have got new roping chutes, and we're trying to add to (the grounds) to make it nice looking out there," he said. "We're getting more help (from supporters) so we don't have to beg, borrow and steal out there. We've gotten pretty self-contained so we don't have to rely on a bunch of other people for everything."

After a few ups and downs through the years, the Irene rodeo has really hit its stride, Marcotte said.

"It's been really good for us the last three years," he said. "We just had record crowds the last three years."

The Irene Rodeo Association owes that record-breaking success to the people who give freely of their time, talent and resources, Marcotte said.

"There has been a lot of

reconstruction of 306th Street from 436th Avenue to Highway 81 — not as a reimbursement to Dakota Plains for reconstruction of 435th Avenue and a mile-long portion of 306th Street.

* Additionally, it was suggested that the possibility of running the TID out for 20 years, rather than nine years, be examined.

* An exploration of limiting the legal boundaries of the TID to the very first grain facility and rail should be done, in the case that more TIDs could be created if there is more development at the site.

The Planning Commission was strongly opposed to the idea of any money going to reimburse Dakota Plains for reconstruction of 435th Avenue and the mile-long stretch of 306th Street.

"My perspective is, if we are going to have a TID, let's

put it on the section of (306th Street) that comes off Highway 81 and put the \$1.1 million toward repairing that road," Planning Commission member Allen Sinclair — who is also a county commissioner — said. "Let (Dakota Plains) take care of what they said they would do in the first place."

Dakota Plains officials have said they are willing to pay for that section of road improvement.

Planning Commission member Carl Kretsinger made the motion to approve the plan with the aforementioned recommendations but added he expects the chances of Dakota Plains coming to Yankton County are "slim to none."

"It's kind of frustrating to me why we're even here tonight," Sinclair said. "I didn't even vote to send it here, because I thought it was a

"I think it's humanity's greatest gift that we have the ability to have this kind of unified field. We're so much more than, 'I think I am.'"

Pearson said attendees of the first session of "Jesus and Buddha" came from diverse backgrounds.

"We've heard any number of times, 'We couldn't do this in our church.' I'm thinking, 'Wow. We should have been doing this a long time ago! We look at other wisdom. We explore science. Why can't we be broad-minded when it comes to matters of faith?'"

"Jesus and Buddha: Paths to Awakening" runs from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday at Christ Episcopal Church and is free to the public. Those who did not attend the first session are welcome to join.

McVay and Pearson said they expect there will be at least two more installments of the series.

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community support and a good bunch of members who have been around for a long time, knowing what we need to do. And the help isn't just from Irene but also from surrounding communities," he said.

"Without the community support and all the help that we get from the volunteers, we couldn't put (the rodeo) on by ourselves."

Admission is \$12 at the gate and \$10 in advance. Kids 10 and under are free.

For more information on the rodeo, follow on Twitter at [@IreneRodeo](https://twitter.com/IreneRodeo) and check the Facebook page for the Irene Rodeo Association.

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net/.

waste of this body's time when we don't have a dance partner."

The motion was approved with an 8-2 vote. Planning Commission member Michael Welch abstained.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Patrick Garrity said he expects the plan will be discussed at Tuesday's County Commission meeting. However, because of legal requirements for advertising, the commission will not be able to finalize it.

Dakota Plains officials have said they will decide where to build their grain facility June 26.

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