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Russian Women May Be Among IS Fighters Detained in Iraq

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Alaa Al-Marjani / Reuters

Iraqi security forces detained an unidentified number of Russian women following a military operation in the city of Mosul, according to unconfirmed reports cited by the German Deutsche Welle (DW) news outlet reported on Tuesday.

The Russians were allegedly detained among 20 other women from countries including Turkey, Canada, and Libya, who allegedly traveled to Iraq to join Islamic State.

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DW quoted an Iraqi military commander as saying the women were discovered in a series of underground tunnels built by Islamic State to move throughout the city undetected.

They were reportedly wearing explosive belts when they were arrested.

By mid-2015, 4,700 jihadists from Russia and Central Asia had traveled to Iraq and Syria to join Islamic State, according to the New York-based Soufan Group (TSG). The security think-tank estimated that the flow of fighters from Russia and the former Soviet Union had increased threefold from June 2014.

In May 2016, Russian security services arrested a 21-year-old student from the Moscow State University, Varvara Karaulova, for attempting to join the radical organization. She was sentenced to more than four years in prison in December 2016.

**Islamic State is banned in Russia as a terrorist organization.*

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