



**Nationaal Coördinator
Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid
Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie**

> Return address P.O. Box 16950 2500 BZ The Hague

To: The President of the Lower House of Parliament
of the States General
P.O. Box 20018
2500 EA The Hague

Our reference
5708950/11/NCTV

Annexes
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*Please state the date and our
reference in your reply. Please
only discuss one subject in
your letter.*

Date 3 October 2011
Subject Presentation of the Summary of the 26th Terrorist Threat Assessment
Netherlands

Please find enclosed the summary of the twenty-sixth Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands of September 2011. The threat level continues to be 'limited'.

The official reporting period of the 26th Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands is from 1 April 2011 up to and including 30 June 2011. Relevant recent developments up to and including 13 September 2011 have, however, also been incorporated in the analysis.

The Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands is prepared by the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security four times a year. It essentially relates to one three-month period, and is primarily intended for the Council for Intelligence and Security Services. The Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands is also discussed with the Permanent Parliamentary Commission for the Intelligence and Security Services.

The Minister of Security and Justice,

I.W. Opstelten

Essence of the 26th Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands

Threat level

The threat level in the Netherlands remains 'limited'. This means that the risk of a terrorist attack is currently low, but that it cannot be eliminated altogether. The threat of jihadist networks in the Netherlands is still small. The resistance among the Dutch people to violent radicalisation and terrorism also continues to be equally high. As became evident again in the present reporting period, Dutch jihadists or jihadists who live in the Netherlands continue to attempt to travel to jihadist conflict areas. Only a few jihadists manage to reach the desired conflict area and to join jihadist structures. The attacks in Norway show that the internal terrorist threat in Western countries is not determined by jihadist terrorism alone. Other ideological convictions may also be translated into terrorist violence.

The most important component of the threat to the Netherlands or to Dutch interests is still the international jihadist threat. International jihadists view the Netherlands as a legitimate target, in particular because of the perceived insults to Islam in the Netherlands. In the past few months, international jihadist websites again published various posts invoking violence against the Netherlands or against Dutch persons. Although these posts strengthen the profile of the Netherlands as an enemy of Islam in jihadist circles, they should primarily be regarded as a way of inciting fear among Westerners and opponents of jihadists and also of mobilising followers.

The attacks in Norway represent the first time in Europe that dozens of people were killed by someone who, in his manifest, invoked primarily anti-Islamic, anti-multicultural, and anti-left-wing views. These attacks can be characterised as terrorist acts, as the attacker, Breivik, directed serious violence towards people out of ideological motives, with the aim of realising political and social change. The attacks in Norway once again emphasise the threat that may be posed by radicalised individuals.

Just as in other Western European countries, there is support for Breivik's views, in particular with regard to his aversion to Islam and left-wing ideologies, in the Netherlands as well. The new element in this is the violent translation of the views mentioned above into strategy, choice of target, mode of operation, use of weapons, and time phasing. There are currently no concrete indications in the Netherlands that groups or individuals are prepared to use terrorist violence to realise the views as formulated by Breivik. It cannot be excluded, however, that Breivik's ideas and actions could form a source of inspiration for fixated or confused loners that are out for their 15 minutes of fame.

International context of jihadist threat

In the last few years, the core of al-Qaeda has weakened, in particular due to the persistent drone attacks in the Tribal Areas in Pakistan. Various leaders of this group were killed in these attacks. The death of its leader, Osama Bin Laden, early in May 2011, was also a serious blow to this group. As opposed to the weakening of the core of al-Qaeda, the threat posed by its regional branches and jihadist individuals acting on their own is increasing. The latter phenomenon is fed by calls from the core of al-Qaeda and 'Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula' (AQAP) to individual Muslim youths in the West to commit small-scale attacks in Europe and the US wherever and whenever possible.

The unrest in the Arab world did not arise as a result of the actions of jihadists. On the contrary, the call for democracy and more freedom in the Arab world may be seen as a rejection of the violent discourse of jihadists. The latter does not affect the fact that jihadists are making substantial intellectual efforts to interpret the developments in North Africa and the Middle East in such a way that they fit in the jihadist ideology and strategy. In his speeches, Ayman al-Zawahiri, the new leader of the core of al-Qaeda, pleaded for cooperation among Islamic groups in the region in order to advance the implementation of Sharia law.

Whether the jihadist movement will actually manage to benefit from the unrest in the Arab world in the long run remains to be seen. It is in any case clear that, in general, terrorist groups benefit from political chaos. This is already visible in Yemen, where AQAP has strengthened its position in the past few months (see 'Developments in key jihadist conflict areas' for more information on this subject).

Developments in key jihadist conflict areas

The regional branches of the core of al-Qaeda seem to benefit from the continued unrest in the Arab world. Jihadists in Yemen in particular have strengthened their position in the past few months. They have succeeded in gaining control of parts of the territory in the south of the country. In this context, it should be noted that AQAP's taking of this territory greatly depends on the support of local actors such as tribes. It is difficult for AQAP to control areas without this local support, because the group does not have sufficient men, weapons or financial resources available. Whether the jihadists will succeed in consolidating their territorial gain will depend on the outcome of the military offensive of the Yemenite army, in cooperation with local tribes, to recover the parts conquered by the jihadists. In addition, there have also been indications that 'Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb' (AQIM), which is active in North Africa and the western Sahel region, is benefiting from the unrest in Libya. There is concern that AQIM has managed to get hold of weapons from Libya.

Al Shabaab is losing ground in Somalia. It is also clearly visible that Al Shabaab uses asymmetrical techniques, such as suicide bombing, increasingly more often instead of open confrontations with the intention to conquer locations. In addition to the fact that Al Shabaab has lost ground, there are also conservative indications that support for Al Shabaab among the Somali population has decreased. There are furthermore indications that the group is contending with financial problems, which makes it more difficult for them to purchase weapons and ammunition.

Non-jihadist terrorism

On 22 July 2011, Europe was shocked by two terrorist attacks in Norway. The 32-year-old Norwegian attacker, Anders Breivik, killed eight people in a bomb attack on government buildings in Oslo, and 69 people in a shooting on the island of Utøya, where a youth camp of the Norwegian Labour Party was being held at the time. Breivik had chosen these targets because he holds the governing Norwegian Labour Party responsible for 'letting in masses of Muslims in Norway'. The Norwegian security service assumes for the time being that Breivik acted on his own and classifies him as a radicalised individual. The Norwegian judicial authorities will charge Breivik with terrorism and possibly also with crimes against humanity.

Breivik had planned his attacks in a lengthy and disciplined manner. He documented the motives for his attacks in a detailed manifest and in an on-line film, in which he pointed to the dangers of the 'islamisation of Europe', multiculturalism, and (left-wing) 'Cultural Marxism'. Breivik stated in the manifest that such a large-scale act of violence, as committed by him, should be the trigger for a European civil war about Muslim migration. In addition to setting out his views in this manifest, he included practical directions for targets, mode of operation, preparations, manufacture of weapons, and steps to avoid detection. The mode of operation described in detail by the attacker may also be of use to other potential or proven violent offenders, such as jihadists and radicalised individuals.

It should be noted, however, that Breivik cannot be characterised as a 'classic' right-wing extremist. Where 'classic' right-wing extremists primarily target racial doctrine and anti-Semitism, Breivik regards Islam as the largest threat and he even has pro-Zionist ideas.

Threat to the Netherlands

The threat from internal jihadist networks has been limited for years. This assessment is no different in the present reporting period. The networks are limited in number, loosely organised, without clear objectives, and without powerful leaders. Jihadists in the Netherlands are generally more focused on the fights in the jihadist conflict areas than on fighting in the West. A small number of Dutch residents or nationals actually travel to such a conflict area or attempt to do so. Only a few jihadists managed to reach the conflict area and to join jihadist structures. It is striking that several Somali Dutch nationals have travelled to Somalia to join the jihad from the United Kingdom in the past few years. This development was also seen in the present reporting period.

The international profile of the Netherlands remained unchanged and is still high. Early in June 2011, the core of al-Qaeda posted a video message which called for the individual jihad in the West and showed the party chairman of the Party for Freedom (PVV), among others, as a potential target. Since then, several posts were placed on international jihadist websites with explicit threats against the Netherlands and in particular against the party chairman of the Party for Freedom. Several of these posts may be regarded as a reaction to the above-mentioned video by the core of al-Qaeda. The postings strengthen the profile of the Netherlands in general and the party chairman of the Party for Freedom in particular as enemies of Islam. There are, however, no indications that the recent posts point to concrete plans to attack the party chairman of the Party for Freedom or other Dutch targets. The posts should therefore be regarded primarily

as a way of inciting fear among Westerners and opponents of jihadists and also of mobilising followers. A recent statement from the Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in which a sharply-worded stand was taken against alleged anti-Islam sentiments in the Netherlands, may strengthen the picture among jihadists of the Netherlands as a country in which Muslims are discriminated against and where Islam and the Prophet Muhammad are regularly slandered. Finally, the Dutch police mission in Kunduz in Afghanistan may potentially contribute to an increased profile of the Netherlands among jihadists.

Violent Radicalisation and Polarisation

In the Netherlands, but also in other countries, the terrorist attacks in Norway resulted in a debate on the degree in which the social climate has contributed to the acts committed by Breivik, as the Norwegian referred to the ideas of many anti-Islamic publicists. Some politicians and opinion makers in the Netherlands and abroad have called upon others to moderate the tone of the debate on Islam.

Animal rights extremists have drawn the attention in the present reporting period through their actions against KLM, because - according to the animal rights extremists - KLM, together with its partner Air France, would allegedly be involved in the transportation of monkeys for the animal testing industry. They also published video images, which were made in secrecy, of alleged malpractices in Dutch pig farming. Activists and extremists fighting for the rights of asylum seekers once again targeted BAM construction company. This company has been a target since 2010 due to the construction of a new judicial complex at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol made by BAM. Some of the persons responsible for the actions against BAM do not shy away from extremist methods such as destruction of property. The National Police Services Agency furthermore concluded that the counter-demonstrations by left-wing extremists against right-wing extremist demonstrations have hardened and have an increasingly more violent character.

Resilience

The resilience of the Dutch population against violent radicalism, extremism, and terrorism continues to be as high as before.