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To: The President of the House of Representatives of
the States General
P.O. Box 20018
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Our reference
5689555/11/NCTb

Enclosures
1

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

Date 18 March 2011
Subject Presentation of the Summary of the 24th Terrorist Threat Assessment
Netherlands,

Please find enclosed a summary of the twenty-fourth Terrorist Threat Assessment
Netherlands of March 2011. The threat level remains limited.

The official reporting period of the twenty-fourth Terrorist Threat Assessment
Netherlands is from 15 September 2010 up to and including 31 December 2010,
but recent developments up to and including 1 March 2011 have also been
included in this assessment.

The Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands is prepared by the National
Coordinator for Counterterrorism 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

Summary of the 24th Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands of March 2011

Date
18 March 2011
Our reference
568955511/NCTb

A Essence of the 24th Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands

Recent developments in the Netherlands and abroad broadly endorse the trends and developments that were outlined in the previous Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands. These developments are still worrisome. Firstly, Jihadists still consider the Netherlands a legitimate target as a result of alleged discrimination of Muslims and the perceived blasphemy against Islam and the Prophet Muhammad in our country. The military involvement in Afghanistan, although decreasing together with the police mission in Afghanistan have furthermore contributed to the international profile of the Netherlands. Secondly, it has again become evident that jihadist groups and individuals did not only have the intention to hit Western targets, but several among them also proved to be persistent in carrying out this intention in Western countries. In the UK, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Germany, Austria, France, Spain, and the Netherlands arrests were made in connection with preparatory acts for terrorist attacks or involvement in terrorist activities. Stockholm was the target of a car bomb and a largely unsuccessful suicide attack of a jihadist nature.

The above acts took place once again against the background of confusing, sometimes contradictory and ominous media reports about threats against European countries. In order to provide a correct picture of that threat, it remains essential to recognise that worldwide, in addition to similarities, there are significant differences between the different jihadist groups with regard to strategy, capacities, and, in particular, also with regard to the practical possibilities to strike Western interests. The threats may also differ by country. Germany, for instance, faces the threat from relatively many German jihadists in the border area of Afghanistan and Pakistan, whereas Denmark and Sweden came into focus of jihadists for years, due to the cartoons that were published many years ago.

A consistent factor in the threat assessment was again the low threat from internal jihadist networks. Compared to other European countries, the Netherlands furthermore has very few people who travel to jihadist conflict areas. There is currently no threat expected from returning jihad travellers. Resistance against violent radicalism, extremism, and terrorism remains high.

The threat level for the Netherlands and Dutch interests abroad therefore remains 'limited'. This means that the risk of an attack is relatively low, but it can certainly not be ruled out. There were, however, no indications of specific preparatory acts for attacks against the Netherlands, Dutch persons or objects abroad. The current jihadist threat primarily originates from abroad.

B Terrorism

B1 International context of jihadist threat

Since the beginning of 2011, popular revolts against the current regimes have taken place in different Arab countries. The revolts are an expression of social discontent with the political and socioeconomic situation. The demonstrators demand more political control and a fairer distribution of wealth. In Egypt and Tunisia, the revolts have resulted in the resignations of the incumbent presidents. In these countries, measures are being taken that are supposed to lead to democracy. Until 1 March, it was not possible to draw any unambiguous

conclusions regarding the outcome of the revolts in other countries. Each country has its own specific circumstances, and the situation is very fluid. Until 1 March, there were not any indications that jihadists were or had been the driving force behind the revolts. There is no evidence that proves that the demonstrators had been inspired by the jihadist ideology.

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Our reference
568955511/NCTb

In addition to possible terrorist threats, the unrest in the Arab world is also, in particular, providing opportunities, as the call for more democracy has shown that the resistance against the jihadist discourse is considerable in the Muslim world. Anti-Western sentiments did not yet play any role in the revolts. This may contribute to an improved relationship between the Muslim and the Western world.

B2 Developments in key jihadist conflict areas

The situation in the jihadist conflict areas continues to be worrisome. In these areas, there is still the risk of terrorist attacks on Dutch interests, as a part of Western interests. This applies primarily to areas in or near Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen as well as to areas in or near Iraq, the Maghreb countries, the Sahel and Somalia. In those conflict areas, groups affiliated to the core of al-Qaeda do not only have the desire to hit Western interests, but they also possess the capacity.

Again, alarming reports have been published on the situation in *Afghanistan* and the US had limited possibilities to positively influence the situation in *Pakistan*. In *Iraq* the 'Islamic State in Iraq' (ISI) has been carrying out terrorist attacks on various targets on an almost daily basis, and it is returning to areas and towns from which it had been ousted in 2006-2007. Just like other jihadist groups, ISI attempts to inspire others to commit attacks. For years, the focus of 'Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb' (AQIM) has been pointed at Western interests in Maghreb and Sahel countries. The largest threat is still posed by abductions. It cannot be excluded that AQIM also wants to carry out attacks outside its own region, including Europe. It is likely that these attacks will be directed against France in particular. In *Yemen*, 'Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula' (AQAP) is unrelentingly continuing its fight against the Yemeni state, Saudi Arabia, and Western interests. In its propaganda, AQAS once again focused on the West itself. With a special edition of the digital magazine *Inspire* about the unsuccessful package bombs at the end of October 2010, AQAS took full advantage of that attack attempt in a propagandist sense. In *Somalia*, the situation in the south remained unstable, and at the end of December the two jihadist groups of Al Shabaab and Hizbul Islam publicly announced that they would join forces under the name of Al Shabaab. On 24 January 2011, a suicide attack in the international air terminal of the largest airport of Moscow killed 37 people and injured more than 100 people. The responsibility for this attack was claimed by the emir (leader) of the Caucasus Emirate, Dokka Umarov. There is, however, reason to doubt whether the Caucasus Emirate was really behind this attack. The attack may also have been carried out by another group.

B3 Threat against Western countries

Since the summer of 2010, intelligence sources have revealed that specific transnational networks are determined to commit attacks in Europe. In various countries in Europe, people were arrested for preparatory acts for terrorist attacks on European territory or for involvement in terrorist activities. At the end of November 2010, arrests were made in Amsterdam (three persons), Aachen (one person), Antwerp (seven persons), Brussels (six persons), and later on in

Austria (one person). The persons arrested in Antwerp are suspected of planning an attack on NATO transports and Jewish targets in Belgium. They are also suspected of being involved in or facilitating jihad going to classic conflict areas. The latter suspicion also applies to the other arrested persons, including the three Dutch Moroccan persons. On 20 December 2010, twelve persons in the United Kingdom were arrested as a precaution, on suspicion of committing preparatory acts for a terrorist attack. On 29 December 2010, four suspects of a terrorist attack were arrested in Denmark and one person in Sweden (Stockholm) in a joint action of the Danish-Swedish police. The suspects had presumably wanted to force their way into the head office of the Danish newspaper *Jyllands Posten* to kill as many people as possible. In the last few years, it was evident time and again that Denmark and in particular the Danish newspaper *Jyllands Posten* and its cartoonist Kurt Westergaard were the targets of jihadists due to the publication of several cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in 2005. Early in November 2010, the French police arrested four men and one woman with French nationalities in Paris. They are suspected of having stayed in a training camp of militant Muslims in the border area of Pakistan and Afghanistan. On 1 December 2010, seven persons were arrested in Spain on suspicion of facilitating the terrorist organisation 'Lashkar-e-Taibia' (LeT) in Pakistan. On the one hand, these arrests indicate that there are still jihadist groups and persons who want to commit attacks or facilitate terrorism in Europe. On the other hand, the plans were recognised beforehand, as a result of which the authorities could intervene, which is an indication of 'high' resistance in Europe.

Date
18 March 2011
Our reference
568955511/NCTb

On Saturday 11 December 2010, the centre of Stockholm was hit by a double bomb attack. The only person killed in this attack was the attacker himself. The first attack took place in a car that was parked on a busy crossing. Several minutes later, a second explosion followed nearby, but this attack largely failed. At the scene, the found body was of a Swedish man of Iraqi origin. Shortly before the two explosions, a Swedish press agency and the Swedish intelligence service had received threats by e-mail, containing extremist messages in Swedish and Arabic. They had been directed against Swedish participation in the international mission in Afghanistan and the Swedish artist Lars Vilks. The latter had drawn a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad depicted as a dog in 2007.

Early in November 2010, Greek anarchists had sent package bombs to various targets, among which several embassies in Athens. The Greek anarchist movement Conspiracy of Cells of Fire claimed responsibility for those attacks. In December 2010 as well, Athens was faced with anarchist violence. Several arrests were made. Following the campaign of package bombs in Athens, Italian anarchists sent package bombs to three embassies in Rome at the end of December. The attacks in Greece and Italy have raised fears that violence by anarchist groups in Europe will increase.

B4 Threat against the Netherlands

Jihadists continued to consider the Netherlands as a legitimate target due to alleged discrimination of Muslims and perceived blasphemy against Islam and the Prophet Muhammad in our country. The military involvement in Afghanistan, although decreasing, together with the police mission in Afghanistan furthermore contributed to the international profile of the Netherlands. In this context, a spokesman of the Afghan Taliban addressed the Netherlands three times in December and January. In January 2011, a prominent Arabic jihadist website twice published postings from an individual in which reference was made to the Netherlands, among other countries, as a legitimate target for jihadists. On the

same site, in December, another poster placed threats against Coptic churches, including those in the Netherlands.

Date

18 March 2011

Our reference

568955511/NCTb

At the end of December 2010, there were serious indications suggesting a possible attack in the Netherlands by the group of Al Shabaab. The Dutch authorities were forced to react quickly when investigation revealed that 24 or 25 December 2010 would be the intended date for an attack and a number of previous indications from the investigation seemed to be confirmed. On Christmas Eve, 24 December, this resulted in the arrests of twelve persons of Somali origin. They were released again shortly afterwards. The searches did not produce any weapons or explosives, and the indications for an attack were consequently not confirmed. The Public Prosecution Office decided to no longer consider the twelve persons that had been arrested as suspects. Nine of them have already received damages. The other three will be paid damages soon.

For several years, the threat from internal jihadist networks has been limited. This has not changed. Several Dutch citizens were, however, involved in or suspected of involvement in transnational jihadist networks, or of having relationships with these networks. The involvement may also result in people travelling to jihadist conflict areas for training or participation in battle. Compared to countries such as Germany, the United Kingdom or Sweden, such travels have only occurred to a limited extent in the Netherlands. For the time being, the number of jihad travellers who have returned have not posed a threat.

B5 Other

The role of the Internet has been an important dimension of jihadist threat for years. The Internet is, after all, a crucial resource for jihadists. The fact that the Internet may play an *inspiring* role, was, for instance, evident in the case of the - albeit largely unsuccessful - suicide attack in Stockholm. The perpetrator had been active on jihadist sites as well as in Facebook and YouTube and he probably acted in the spirit of the jihadist discourse on the Internet.

Since the terrorist attacks in the city of Mumbai in India at the end of 2008, there have been concerns that terrorists will again apply the modus operandi used there. Since July 2010, messages about attacks in Europe 'Mumbai style' have been circulating in the media. According to the Danish authorities, the suspects of the thwarted attack on *Jyllands Posten* had wanted to commit an attack based on that model. From what is currently known, the plans are not entirely comparable to the attacks in Mumbai.

In the past few years, it was evident time and again that the Danish and Swedish Muhammad cartoons were still mobilising jihadists and influencing the choice of target. This was evidenced once again by the suicide attack in Sweden and the thwarted attack in Denmark. The Danish cartoon case, and as a corollary to that, the Swedish case, have gradually become a symbol for Western contempt for Islam. This may be a possible explanation for the persisting determination to perpetrate attacks against Danish and Swedish targets.

C Violent Radicalisation and Polarisation

The Annual Integration Report of Statistics Netherlands confirmed the alarming developments in the Somali-Dutch community identified earlier. The outcome confirms the picture of a breeding ground for radicalisation. For the time being, this only concerns a limited number of Somali-Dutch individuals and it does not seem to have led to concrete cases of radicalisation on a collective level.

In the past period as well, the public and political debate on issues such as integration, immigration, and Islam demonstrated sharp-edged sides, on various occasions. A recurrent theme in this context was the ban on face-covering clothing, popularly termed 'the burka ban'. This ban is a sensitive theme, which may draw the attention of jihadist individuals and organisations. The French ban is an example of this. In that case, jihadists did not shrink from misrepresentations, manipulation, and incitement.

Date
18 March 2011
Our reference
568955511/NCTb

On 13 December 2010, 'Shariah4Holland' was launched on the Internet. This virtual group states that it wants to present Islam in its purest form according to the interpretation of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, and pursues the implementation of Islamic legislation in the Netherlands. The group has not called for violent actions. Such a radical dawa on the Internet may have mobilising and radicalising effects. The initiative does not seem to have produced many followers and it was criticised by many on the Internet, in particular also from Muslim circles.

With the shooting in Tuscon (Arizona) on 8 January 2011, when a 22-year-old man shot a Congresswoman in the head, killed six onlookers, and injured another thirteen people, the United States were painfully confronted once again with the phenomenon of the 'solo attacker'. Hatred of the system, in combination with faith in conspiracy theories, may provide the motivation for attacks against representatives of the political and social system. Personal disorders or traumatic experiences also often play a role in it.

D Resistance

The resistance in the Netherlands against violent radicalism, extremism, and terrorism continues to be high. An illustration of this is the reaction of the Muslim organisations, after it became known that three Coptic churches in the Netherlands were on the list of possible targets. The statements made by Muslim communities are consistent with the tendency of the last few years, in which Dutch Muslims have openly rejected violence that is acknowledged or committed in the name of Islam.