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Our reference
5717738/11/NCTV

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

Date 12 December 2011
Subject Presentation of the summary of the 27th Terrorist Threat Assessment
Netherlands

Please find enclosed the summary of the twenty-seventh Terrorist Threat
Assessment Netherlands of December 2011. The threat level remains 'limited'.

The official reporting period of the 27th Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands
is from 1 July 2011 up to and including 20 September 2011. Relevant recent
developments up to and including 22 November 2011 have, however, also been
incorporated into 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

Summary of the 27th Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands, December 2011

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.

In the past few months, several incidents took place that have slightly reduced the threat assessment for the West. After Osama bin Laden was killed in May of this year, for instance, several leaders of the core of al-Qaeda and affiliated organisations were killed or taken prisoner, which has eroded the strength of these groups even further. The death of Attiyah Abd al-Rahman in August (see the 26th Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands) and that of the ideologist Anwar al-Awlaki in September were of particular importance in this context. Attiyah Abd al-Rahman was seen as number two in the core of al-Qaeda and a very important operational leader. Al-Awlaki, an American-Yemeni jihadist, had inspired various jihadist persons in the West through his sermons and publications on the Internet.

A favourable development for the Netherlands is that fewer messages containing threats to the Netherlands and Dutch nationals were published on relevant jihadist websites in the past few months than compared to the preceding period. It is, however, not possible to conclude from this - at least not yet - that the Netherlands is coming into play as a target less prominently than before. Not only must the number of mentions be taken into consideration, but also the content of the messages and the influence that the individual posting these messages has on the jihadist community.

There have also been developments that are worrisome or have remained worrisome. Jihadist organisations and networks have remained equally active in various conflict areas of the jihad. People from the Netherlands and Dutch nationals who live elsewhere are still travelling to those conflict areas in order to join the jihadist groups, although still limited in number. The risk of these jihad travellers committing terrorist violence against Western interests (including those of the Netherlands) exists more prominently in the countries in which the battles are being fought than in Europe itself. Several terrorist groups in these areas furthermore have the intention and capacity to carry out attacks in the West as well. In addition to this, people who were suspected of devising jihadist activities have been arrested in various European countries and in the United States. The outcomes and consequences of the political developments in various countries in North Africa and the Middle East are also still unclear. 'Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula' (AQAP), 'Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb' (AQIM), and possibly other jihadist groups have benefited from the unrest and inadequate state control in some of those countries or parts thereof. What is a matter of concern is that this sometimes appears to lead to these groups acquiring access to increasingly larger quantities of weapons, ammunition, and freedom of movement.

Jihadist networks in the Netherlands have been limited in number and loosely organised for years, and lack strong leaders or clear targets. In addition, the resistance of the Dutch population to extremist and terrorist violence is high. Anders Breivik's attack in Norway in July of this year did demonstrate, however, that there is a need for vigilance regarding terrorist violence from other than jihadist considerations. Insofar as the Netherlands is concerned, such violence is

imaginable, but there are not any concrete indications that attacks are being prepared.

Incidents in other European countries show that an aggravating economic crisis may cause social instability and increase the chance of ideologically inspired violence. In addition, some European countries have been confronted with violent acts that have been attributed to extreme right. In the Netherlands, there have not yet been any indications of such threats, but they certainly cannot be eliminated altogether in advance.

International context of jihadist threat

Al-Zawahiri, the leader of the core of al-Qaeda and successor to Osama bin Laden who was killed earlier this year, is heading a weakened organisation. After the death of Osama bin Laden and Attiyah Abd al-Rahman, which information was dealt with in the previous Terrorist Threat Assessments Netherlands, yet another important leader was lost in September: Younis al-Mauritani was arrested in Pakistan. Partly because of his promise to revenge the death of Bin Laden, al-Zawahiri is under pressure to prove the operational strength of the core of al-Qaeda. So far, the core of al-Qaeda has not been successful in this. The tenth anniversary of the attacks of 2001 went by without any attacks, whereas information was found on the compound of Bin Laden that indicated that the core of al-Qaeda had originally aimed to mark this day with a massive attack.

With the death of al-Awlaki on 30 September, the international jihadist movement, and AQAP in particular, lost an important source of inspiration. It is, however, expected that al-Awlaki will live on in jihadist circles as a 'martyr' and that his sermons and publications circulating on the Internet will continue to be a source of inspiration for jihadists and potential jihadists, in the West as well, and certainly in the short term. Together with al-Awlaki, the American Pakistani Samir Khan was also killed. He was an important promoter of AQAP and the driving force behind AQAP's online English jihadist magazine *Inspire*, which mainly attempts to inspire and mobilise jihadists in the West. It is expected that it will be difficult to replace these two jihadists with their abilities and personality.

Considering the roles they fulfilled, the death of al-Awlaki (and Samir Khan) will probably not have any consequences for the operational strength of AQAP. The leadership of the organisation is still intact as well.

Developments in key jihadist conflict areas

Broadly speaking, the most important terrorist networks in North Africa (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb), the Middle East (the Islamic State in Iraq, ISI), and the Arabian Peninsula (Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula) have not changed course or tactics. It is possible, however, to observe a number of relevant developments.

The core of al-Qaeda has attempted to benefit from the revolts in North Africa and the Middle East. It has propagated, among other things, a jihad of 'argumentation and communication' in those areas. In its communications, the core of al-Qaeda has called on jihadist networks to limit attacks in Muslim countries to attacks against 'corrupt rulers'. The core of al-Qaeda has also attempted to benefit from the revolts with its wish to implement Sharia; in its attempts to fulfil this wish, it has called on the people there to vote during the elections for those parties that intend to implement Sharia. So far, this call has found little response.

Compared to the other countries in North Africa, the situation in Libya is the most risky. In this country, the fighters and leaders of the former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) took part in the Libyan revolution. Although they had publicly denounced the ideology of the core of al-Qaeda even before the revolution, the question is whether this was sincere in all cases. These former members of the LIFG have joined the Libyan Islamic Movement for Change (LIMC). Some individuals sympathise with the jihadist ideology and there are concerns about possible connections between individuals of the LIMC and AQIM. In addition, in particular the persistent reports that AQIM has allegedly been able to seize weapons, including anti-aircraft missiles and other materials, have caused much concern in the West.

Threat to and in Europe

In the period around the tenth anniversary of 9/11, several arrests were made in various European countries (United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, Germany, and Finland) to prevent attacks or stop supporting activities. Although these arrests were made in the same period of time, there do not seem to be any connections between the arrests. A connection with the Netherlands has not been established either.

The above-mentioned incidents illustrate the unremitting attempts of jihadists to hit the West with ingenuity. Although the *arrests* in the incidents mentioned above were made around the tenth anniversary of 9/11, there is no information available that the *threat information* in these conspiracies pointed specifically to that anniversary. Threats around special days and anniversaries such as 9/11 are, however, often considered to be more serious by the authorities and this may cause them to act on the safe side. Whether this was the case here is not entirely clear, but the fact is that a proactive approach has been adopted on the basis of alertness and apparently a good information position.

The attacks of Anders Breivik in Norway, which killed 77 people (26th Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands), showed the terrorist danger from a perspective other than the jihadist ideology. Various attacks and attempted assassinations that occurred in Germany in the past few years have recently been associated with extreme right.

Threat to the Netherlands

The Netherlands continues to be a legitimate target for jihadists, but it does not have the status of 'preferred target' such as the United States, Israel, and the United Kingdom. The Netherlands is considered an ally in the perceived coalition of 'crusaders' against Islam and as a country in which Muslims are said to be discriminated against and Islam is allegedly insulted. The Dutch military/civil military involvement in Islamic countries and the Dutch police mission in Afghanistan contribute to the high Dutch profile. In the past few months, however, there were fewer messages containing threats to the Netherlands or Dutch nationals on relevant jihadist websites. The most prominent message was a repetition of a threat to the leader of the Party for Freedom (PVV). In general, such messages must be considered primarily as attempts of jihadists to incite fear among their enemies and to mobilise jihadist allies. With regard to the above-mentioned threat, there is not any information available that the individual posting the message could be relying on a specific authority or inspiring influence on other jihadists. Other messages about the Netherlands, such as those about some proposals from Dutch Members of Parliament, were of a factual nature and did not contain any threats.

It is, however, not possible to conclude from this - at least not yet - that the Netherlands comes into play as a target less prominently than before.

In the past few months, the picture of jihadist networks in the Netherlands has not changed. Those networks have been limited in number and loosely organised for years, and lack strong leaders or clear targets. Individuals who wish to join the jihad, if this wish is felt at all, tend to focus more on foreign jihadist conflict areas than on joining the jihad in and against the Netherlands. Although there were more signals about jihad travellers from the Netherlands in 2011 (sometimes Dutch nationals living abroad), it is difficult to establish whether the number of jihad travellers has actually risen. Incidentally, compared to other countries, such as the United Kingdom and Germany, this still concerns a limited number of persons. What is true is that, by learning from failed attempts and preparing themselves better, they appear to be able to reach their destination more often than they used to. Since the revolts in countries in North Africa and the Middle East, the destinations currently also include countries in these areas.

Violent Radicalisation and Polarisation

Compared to other extreme left actions, actions directed towards Dutch asylum policy have been most prominent for some time now. The actions concerned are usually meetings and public manifestations such as demonstrations and noise protests, but there were also incidents of an extremist nature, such as arson attacks, which were usually small-scale. In this context, asylum extremists have chosen derivative targets for some time, such as construction companies for asylum and removal centres.

Further developments in the financial and economic crisis may be of influence in the months to come, in particular on the left extremist groups. In countries such as Greece and Italy, it is possible to observe social tension and violent actions due to the debt crisis, with anarchists playing an important role. Such violent actions could also be observed in Berlin: in October 2011 left-wing extremists committed acts of sabotage on the railway network, which acts were motivated by criticism of the German military presence in Afghanistan *and* on the capitalist system. In the Netherlands, the situation - and in particular the economic situation - differs substantially from the situations in Italy and Greece and, so far, only peaceful protests have taken place.

Resistance

The resistance of the Dutch population against radicalism, extremism, and terrorism continues to be present at the same level.

On Dutch Internet forums, blogs, and social media, people are still reacting to Anders Breivik's attacks in Norway. The majority of articles and reactions are opposed to Breivik's acts of violence and his ideas (the aversion of left-wing ideologies, Islam, and multicultural society), which shows a high level of resistance. Only very few individuals consider him a hero and a resistance fighter. On several blogs, nevertheless the tone of the debate on Islam after the attacks in Norway has remained equally harsh.

Over the years, liberal Muslims as well as orthodox believers have publicly denounced extremism and violence more and more emphatically. A notable fact is that several members of the Hofstad Group who were recently released also made statements in public distancing themselves from violent extremism.

Organisations that still make radical statements in the public domain barely get a look in. This applies, for instance, to Hizb ut-Tahrir and Sharia4Holland. The few demonstrations organised by them, such as those against the so-called 'burka ban', attracted not more than several dozens of supporters.