

Comprehensive Counterterrorism Strategy

Threat level

The threat of terrorism is as high as it ever was and remains an ongoing concern for European – and therefore also Dutch – society. As recent attacks have shown, Europe is still a target for jihadist groups. Furthermore, the current threat is more complex and unpredictable than in the past. A wide range of actors are involved: terrorist organisations, transnational networks, small groups and lone actors. They are capable of perpetrating both small- and large-scale attacks; they can be well-prepared or amateurish, and they can employ many different methods of attack against a wide variety of targets. Both al Qa'ida and ISIS are willing and able to carry out attacks in Europe. Despite the loss of territory in Iraq and Syria, including the fall of Raqqa, ISIS will continue to destabilise the region and pose a terrorist threat in the West and other parts of the world. It should be borne in mind that terrorist attacks may also be perpetrated by individuals or groups inspired by other motives or concerns: far-right ideas, environmentalism, asylum issues etc.

With regard to means of attack, jihadists and other extremists are becoming more knowledgeable all the time. They are also capitalising on the opportunities offered by modern digital media for disseminating propaganda, instructional videos, direct communication and networking efforts. And the threat is increasingly transnational in nature: developments beyond our borders often have a direct impact on security in the Netherlands and vice versa. There is therefore still a real risk that the Netherlands or Dutch nationals abroad could be the target of politically motivated acts of violence.

Social tensions and polarisation still have the potential to breed extremism. Various domestic and international actors take advantage of social trends and incidents to emphasise the irreconcilability of different viewpoints. In this way, they pit different groups of people against each other or call for their own followers to turn their backs on society, thus undermining our democratic society and the rule of law in the long run. Certain people and groups – especially young people – are particularly susceptible to extremist messages, which creates a risk of new terrorist threats.

Counterterrorism

In recent years, significant investments have been made in order to mitigate the threat posed by extremism and terrorism. In 2014, new and existing counterterrorist measures were consolidated in a plan of action: 'An Integrated Approach to Jihadism' (*Actieprogramma*

Integrale Aanpak Jihadisme).¹ A key aspect of this strategy is the early identification of extremism and the threat posed by terrorism. Investments have been made in a number of areas, including boosting intelligence capabilities and information sharing; securing and guarding people and property – including soft targets; preventing recruitment; and promoting international collaboration in order to tackle global threats at the source. Administrative powers have been significantly expanded to enable timely intervention through the imposition of travel bans, banning orders, a requirement to report to the authorities, or restraining orders.² The application of special powers facilitates effective investigation and prosecution so that those who perpetrate terrorist crimes and finance terrorism can be convicted.

At European level, collaboration has been reinforced by the establishment of the Counter Terrorism Group (CTG) platform and the EU Road Map for improving information-sharing relating to counterterrorism, border security and fighting serious crime. In addition, substantial investments have been made to boost capabilities in the area of counterterrorism and preventing extremism in third countries, especially in the countries surrounding Europe. In addition, the Netherlands has become a global leader in various multilateral partnerships that work to establish innovative counterterrorism measures, promote preventive strategies and the capacity-building they require, and take action to address new threat developments.³

In the years ahead, counterterrorism partners will continue to work together to prevent extremism and terrorism. The current threat level means having to play chess on several boards at the same time. The core tasks remain the same: identifying threats from radicalised individuals early on and bringing together partners at the local, national and international levels. Information sharing, investment in bilateral and multilateral cooperation and further development of national and international counterterrorism strategies are all vital to ensuring effective action against extremism and terrorism. All organisations involved in counterterrorism must be capable of responding flexibly to the evolving threat landscape. This requires ongoing monitoring to ensure the effective implementation of the available measures and the continual updating of expertise, technology, powers and partnerships (local, national and international).

¹ Parliamentary paper 29 754, no. 432.

² Counterterrorism (Interim Administrative Measures) Act (*Wet bestuurlijke maatregelen terrorismebestrijding*) (Explanatory Memorandum to Parliamentary Paper 34 359, no. 3).

³ Examples include the UN, the EU, NATO, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL (Anti-ISIL Coalition) and collaboration in relation to countering violent extremism and organisations.

The government feels strongly that no effort should be spared when it comes to minimising the risks stemming from terrorists and extremists. Furthermore, any measures that infringe on people's privacy and other civil liberties should always be carefully assessed to determine whether they are justified. The National Counterterrorism Strategy 2016-2020, which unites all governmental partners within a collective approach to extremism and terrorism in the Netherlands, provides the framework for the necessary interventions.⁴ Below is a brief description of the current state of affairs with regard to each area of intervention, together with an indication of the most important sub-themes in that area in the years ahead.

Intervention 1 – Procure: obtaining and interpreting intelligence about real and potential threats to the Netherlands and to Dutch interests abroad in a timely manner

Enhancing local information sharing

Information sharing will always be a major priority in the counterterrorism strategy. Providing access to, processing, analysing and sharing information is of vital importance to identifying potential terrorists in a timely manner and taking appropriate measures. Intelligence on risks and potential radicalisation are discussed in multidisciplinary case conferences, which involve local, regional and national parties. At these meetings, decisions are taken on a case-by-case basis about the most effective measures to reduce the threat posed by a given individual.

An essential element of the 'person-specific approach' is the need for the parties involved to share relevant information about a given individual as soon as possible. This is vital if they are to make a comprehensive and effective assessment of the risks posed by the individual in question. A national model agreement for a person-specific approach to tackling has been drawn up with a view to further clarifying the legal framework within which the parties involved in the case conferences can share information about individuals who are or may be radicalising. Furthermore, the authorities will look into whether it is possible and advisable to expand municipalities' statutory responsibilities regarding radicalisation, and if so, what data processing activities would be required in order to fulfil these responsibilities.

Consolidating international information-sharing practices

In recent years, a lot of hard work has been done to promote international information sharing. At European level, cooperation between security services within the Counter Terrorism Group (CTG) has been boosted by the creation of a real-time database and the

⁴ Parliamentary paper 29 754, no. 391.

establishment of an operational platform where intelligence officers can meet in order to share and analyse operational data and findings on terrorism-related matters. There have already been a number of operational successes, resulting in arrests and the disruption of plans in Europe. The Netherlands is working hard to further consolidate and expand this collaboration. Furthermore, investments have been made in a global diplomatic counterterrorism network to promote bilateral information sharing with at-risk countries. Thanks in part to the Dutch efforts within the Anti-ISIS Coalition, the volume of information shared via Interpol has tripled in recent years. In the coming period, too, various countries will work to better align themselves with Interpol's information flows. Finally, the Netherlands' international efforts, including military operations, have significantly improved the Netherlands' position with regard to information and intelligence.

Effective detection and alert systems, national and international information-sharing practices and knowledge of travel movements enable security services to block potential jihadist travellers, identify returnees and prevent attacks. The implementation of the Passenger Name Record (PNR) Directive and the creation of a passenger-information unit (Pi-NL) in May 2018 will enable analysis of all passenger details for flights to, from and via the Netherlands, for counterterrorism purposes. The Netherlands is currently exploring options for analysing passenger data for travellers on international high-speed trains, international bus services and international shipping services to detect possible terrorism-related travel activity. EU member states, Europol and third countries will step up their information sharing. By sharing its central technical facility for travel data, the Netherlands will help boost the detection capacity of third countries.

Enabling the services in the immigration system to better identify jihadists and signs of radicalisation

In 2015, Europe experienced a huge influx of immigrants. As stated in multiple editions of the quarterly Terrorist Threat Assessments for the Netherlands, there is a possibility that individuals connected with terrorist organisations may pose as refugees and come to Europe to claim asylum. For some time now, investments have therefore been made in the immigration system in order to boost the various agencies' ability to flag possible instances of radicalisation, recruitment and/or jihadist intentions. It is particularly important in this regard to focus on irregular migrants, who are often less visible to authorities as they do not have a residence permit for the Netherlands. In the coming period, we will examine and identify new opportunities to foster cooperation and the information sharing and to raise awareness among all partners involved with this target group (including those not directly involved in monitoring or reception). This increases the likelihood that radicalisation and/or

other undesirable behaviour can be identified at an early stage and appropriate action can be taken.

In line with developments in the threat level, the government is making investments to expand knowledge within the consular and immigration system, and continuing to pursue a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy. For example, risk profiles are drawn up for use by the network of missions abroad to support embassy staff in identifying threats posed by individuals applying for asylum outside the Netherlands. Another example is the National Administrative Consultation on Radicalisation within the Immigration System (LRO). The LRO was established to enhance the exchange of information on non-specific signs of radicalisation between partners in the immigration system and the security services. This gives the parties concerned a better sense of the situation at hand and of what action can be taken on individual cases, as well as fostering greater awareness among the affiliated parties.

Intervention 2 – Prevent: preventing and disrupting extremism and terrorism and thwarting attacks

Local strategy

Municipalities play a crucial role in countering radicalisation and mitigating threats posed by extremist individuals. Municipalities function as coordinators in the local strategy, the goal of which is to identify radicalisation, extremism and threats, and take action. For this purpose, local and national partners work together closely and have a wide range of measures at their disposal. These vary from local measures, such as the deployment of local key actors or neighbourhood police officers, to action at central government level, such as asset freezing and passport revocation. In recent years, the municipalities most seriously affected by these issues have received intensive support.⁵

The local strategy will be further developed in the years to come. It is particularly important to increase knowledge about identification and intervention within *smaller* municipalities. To this end, these municipalities will receive support from regional partnerships initiated by larger municipalities and community safety partnerships, and from bodies such as the National Government Training Institute for the Prevention of Radicalisation (ROR), the Social Stability Expertise Unit (ESS) and the Prevention of Extremism and Polarisation among

⁵ Funds have been allocated to 20 regions/municipalities (€400,000 in 2015, €6 million in 2016, €6.3 million in 2017).

Young People (JEP) knowledge platform. On the international stage, the Netherlands is working hard to share knowledge and experience with regard to tackling radicalisation.

Expansion of measures to prevent and combat extremism

We have a duty to combat all extremist threats, regardless of their nature or underlying ideology. Parties in the youth sector play an essential role in combating extremism and preventing its propagation. In recent years, investments have been made to involve social partners at national and local level – such as mental health workers, youth care workers, schools, community task forces and mosques – in the fight against extremism and terrorism. National support facilities are also available that provide specialist expertise and advice (e.g. ROR, ESS, the School & Safety Foundation (SSV), the Family Advice Centre on Radicalisation and the Integrated Safety and Security in Higher Education platform (IV-HO)). Recently, the JEP knowledge platform referred to above was set up for professionals and volunteers involved in education. The counter-extremism strategy is also closely aligned with the broader approach to potentially violent individuals. Here too, as with suspected jihadists, municipalities can make use of the person-specific approach.

In the next few years, the contribution made by the youth and educational services will be further expanded. It is vital that administrators and decision-makers within the youth and education services remain aware of the part they play in tackling extremism, that professionals in those services feel supported in these efforts, and that their knowledge and expertise is continually developed. By providing a programme that contains elements useful to both fields, the authorities can boost these professionals' resilience. This can be done by offering training courses focusing on privacy and information sharing as well as instruments to enable those working in these sectors to identify radicalisation at an early stage and report any worrying signs, within the bounds of the law and professional requirements. For educational institutions, this policy constitutes a follow-up to the complementary education strategy. Schools will also be more closely involved in the municipal extremism strategy. There will be close collaboration with the JEP knowledge platform and the IV-HO platform, which will strengthen the bonds between youth care and education.

The Netherlands supports EU member states with respect to the development and implementation of measures to combat radicalisation and extremism. This support will be enhanced in the years to come. The goal of these efforts is to boost the effectiveness of the EU's contribution and achieve a greater degree of coordination between existing EU initiatives such as the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) Centre of Excellence and the European Strategic Communication Network.

Extremist propaganda

At both national and international level, the government is working to prevent the dissemination of extremist propaganda. Elements of Salafist ideology can create a breeding ground for violent jihadist radicalisation. Promoting and defending our democratic society under the rule of law is an important weapon in combating extremist messages and extremist interpretations of Islam. The Public Prosecution Service will take action in the event any laws are violated. Extremist speakers and preachers who incite violence or hatred must not be given a platform. Any such extremist speakers originating from non-Schengen countries will have their visa applications refused or their visas revoked. Furthermore, the EU member states have agreed to use the Schengen Information System to register all extremist speakers who are subject to a visa requirement and may pose a threat to public order. This international collaboration seeks to keep extremist speakers who pose such a threat out of the Schengen zone.

The influence of extremist propaganda is also reduced by boosting resilience, undermining propaganda and supporting alternative voices both online and off, as part of the local strategy. An independent fund⁶ has been set up to support cultural initiatives that encourage critical reflection/self-reflection in order to boost young people's resilience to extremist messages.

Digital media strategy

In recent years, digital media have become increasingly important as a means of spreading jihadist ideology and instructions as well as forging and maintaining contact between jihadists. Jihadists' and other extremists' digital-media knowledge and skills continue to evolve, and these groups are increasingly capitalising on the opportunities that modern digital media provide. At both national and international level, the government is working to prevent the dissemination of extremist propaganda. This includes the efforts of the police's Internet Referral Unit (IRU NL), which – in consultation with the Public Prosecution Service – actively tracks down criminal jihadist and/or extremist content and works with internet companies to have it removed. The European Commission, Europol, the EU member states and the major internet companies are working together closely to tackle extremist web content. It is vital that the private sector shoulder its responsibilities in this area. Work is also being done within the scope of the Anti-ISIS Coalition and the GCTF to remove extremist

⁶ ZOZ Fund, which falls under the Prince Bernhard Cultural Fund

content and combat its distribution. Furthermore, the Anti-ISIS Coalition is making efforts to encourage alternative local voices against ISIS in regions susceptible to extremism.

In the years ahead, a comprehensive multidisciplinary strategy will be pursued to crack down on extremist and terrorist use of digital media. All organisations involved will strive to further pool their linguistic, technical and substantive expertise in order to identify extremist and terrorist structures and activities at an early stage and facilitate effective and efficient action and interventions on the basis of collective analysis.

Addressing the resources used in attacks, modi operandi and terrorist financing

The government is also working to restrict access to means of attack and financial resources, so as to thwart the preparation and perpetration of terrorist acts. In order to combat terrorist financing, efforts are being made to further improve information-sharing practices and enhance national and international cooperation. In this regard, both public parties (the police, the Netherlands Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU-NL), the Fiscal Information and Investigation Service (FIOD) and the Public Prosecution Service) and private parties (financial institutions) play an essential role. For this reason, what had initially been temporary collaborative ventures between these parties, such as the ongoing project on terrorist financing within the Financial Expertise Centre, will now be embedded in policy. In line with international obligations, the assets of jihadist travellers will continue to be frozen. Efforts will also be made to implement more terrorism sanctions at EU or UN level, in the light of these bodies' potential reach, so as to increase the impact of these sanctions outside the Netherlands.

The efforts made in recent years to restrict terrorists' means of attack have mainly focused on regulating or prohibiting materials that can be used to perpetrate violence. Recent developments and incidents have shown that terrorists' modi operandi are constantly evolving. Although there is still a risk of attacks using explosives (home-made or otherwise), firearms and drones, recent attacks have been perpetrated using household materials that do not lend themselves to prohibition. A systematic, ongoing threat assessment will ensure that the authorities have a good sense of the modi operandi used by individual terrorists. Targeted measures can then be taken to mitigate these threats.

Strategy on returnees

The returnee strategy focuses on protecting national security as effectively as possible. At the same time, one of the fundamental principles of our society is that people must answer to a court for their crimes, including individuals who join terrorist organisations. It is expected

that in the coming period the Netherlands will have to deal with an increased numbers of returnees. Returnees constitute a complex problem, which involves weighing up different interests concerning national and international law. In addition, the ever-shifting situation in the region can affect this problem. It will be vitally important in the coming months and years to examine all relevant factors and circumstances on a case-by-case basis in order to intervene in an effective manner and minimise security risks. In some cases, the revocation of a person's Dutch citizenship may be necessary in the interests of our national security. Once citizenship is revoked, the individual in question is declared an undesirable alien, which is a way of preventing their legal return to the Netherlands.

When returnees come back to the Netherlands, local and national government bodies and other public bodies will work together to minimise the threat posed by these individuals. The primary measure will be criminal prosecution of returnees, possibly supplemented by interventions in line with the local strategy. Following any custodial sentence that may be imposed, the authorities will work to ensure the former inmates' guided and closely monitored reintegration into society. In the coming period, the deradicalisation of returnees and their reintegration into society will pose a major challenge, requiring further development of both deradicalisation methods (inside and outside of prison) and reintegration methods.

A customised approach must be adopted in the case of Dutch children born in or taken by their parent(s) to a jihadist war zone. A nationally operating advisory team has been set up to advise municipalities regarding reception, care, education and any security risks relating to these children. This team consists of experts in the fields of radicalisation, youth care, psychological trauma and complex traumas.

The international dimension

In the years to come, the diplomatic counterterrorism expert network will support countries outside Europe and help boost their resilience. Their approach can include early warning strategies, identifying and tackling the root causes of radicalisation, supporting and funding programmes aimed at preventing and combating extremism, and supporting programmes that seek to strengthen the justice system, deradicalisation programmes in prisons, etc. Furthermore, to fulfil the Netherlands' constitutional responsibility to 'maintain and promote the international legal order', the Dutch armed forces can be deployed abroad. Such deployment will directly help combat the terrorist threat in the Netherlands. Examples include participation in military missions and operations directly related to the terrorist threat in the Netherlands, and stamping out safe havens for terrorist organisations. In addition to military missions, the armed forces can be deployed as part of international interventions, such as

rescuing Dutch nationals being held hostage abroad, or civil-military operations such as those conducted by Frontex.

Intervention 3 – Protect: protecting people, property and vital processes from extremist and terrorist threats (both real-world and virtual)

Enhancing the protection of people and property (including soft targets)

Security of large-scale events, stations, airports, religious institutions, etc. has the government's full attention. All parties involved (central and local government, security services and private partners) are continually learning from incidents and attacks. In close collaboration, these parties examine areas in which security can be tightened up and reflect on whether additional measures or activities could further reduce security risks. For example, a set of guidelines is currently in development advising business owners and operators about what security measures should be taken in busy areas in cities. The expansion of existing special support capabilities means that in the event of a large-scale attack, military units can be quickly deployed to assist operational services on the scene. In the years to come, security concepts will be further developed and updated; this includes a proactive and flexible intervention concept. Work is also being done with the competent authorities and/or implementation bodies at both local and EU/GCTF level to ensure effective national and international knowledge sharing, best practices and innovation regarding the protection of soft targets and special events.

Investments in civil-aviation security

Civil aviation is subject to an ongoing terrorist threat. A major concern of the last year was the possibility that explosives could be smuggled onto aircraft in electronic devices. This has resulted in extra security measures being implemented around the world. In the coming period, improvements will be made to the equipment used to scan hand luggage. Moreover, in collaboration with other EU member states and the European Commission, improvements will be made to airport security in countries that offer direct flights to the EU. Knowledge and expertise in the field of civil aviation will be exchanged bilaterally as well, in order to improve security in third countries.

Boosting digital resilience (cybersecurity)

Although terrorists have not yet proved themselves capable of advanced cyberattacks, we must be vigilant with regard to the development and use of cyberattack techniques. Boosting resilience to cyberattacks and to abuse of ICT systems is a key element of cybersecurity policy. The government is working to boost digital resilience more generally, taking

measures against parties that pose a significant threat. These measures also help to boost resilience to terrorist cyberattacks. Developments related to terrorist cyber threats are discussed in the annual National Cybersecurity Assessment.

Intervention 4 – Prepare: being optimally prepared for extremist and terrorist violence and its consequences

Uniform collective preparation

The Netherlands continues to invest in preparation for possible attacks, focusing on a number of important and specific points, such as multidisciplinary and nationwide preparation for extremist and terrorist violence. We are concentrating in particular on first responders such as the police, fire brigade and ambulance services, as well as the cooperation between local, regional and national services. This means that knowledge, including lessons learned from incidents abroad, must be shared, embedded and continually updated, and substantial efforts must be made to conduct joint training and exercises. Communication plays a vital role in preparing for attacks and the consequences of attacks. The tone and the content of government communication on this issue will influence society's resilience in this regard. Given the threat level and the importance of ensuring the public knows how to respond, more attention will be given to risk communication regarding terrorist threats and attacks. Finally, based on a European directive and other policies, efforts will be made to ensure preparations for better aftercare for the victims of terrorist attacks.

Intervention 5 – Pursue: upholding our democratic values and the rule of law in the face of extremism and terrorism

Enhancing investigation and prosecution of jihadists (travellers, returnees and 'stay-at-home' jihadists)

Identification and prosecution are vital facets of counterterrorism policy. As part of the criminal justice strategy on jihadist travellers and returnees, the Public Prosecution Service and the police are currently working at local, regional, national and international level to compile case files for investigation and prosecution purposes. In recent years, this has resulted in the conviction of many returnees and a number of jihadist travellers who did not return to the Netherlands. The latter were prosecuted and convicted in absentia. The powers current available under criminal law are adequate, although naturally they are continually updated in line with developments in case law. A bill seeking to bolster the criminal-law

approach to terrorism is currently under consideration.⁷ Among other matters, the proposed legislation will enable extension of the pre-trial detention of terrorist suspects even without any additional serious grounds for suspicion, DNA sampling of suspected terrorists, the revocation of voting rights and an obligation to lodge a criminal complaint for terrorist offences. Furthermore, it was announced in the coalition agreement that a legislative proposal will be submitted to parliament to criminalise wilful presence without permission in an area controlled by a terrorist organisation.

A great deal of attention is being paid to jihadist travellers and returnees. The relationship between crime and terrorism also warrants continual attention, at both national and international level, for instance through Europol. For this reason, it is important that the police be able to match their crime-related data with their counterterrorism-related data to the greatest extent possible in order to enable faster and more effective identification of interlinkages. This can enable further development of individual files and prosecution of suspects.

In the EU, there are ongoing discussions regarding the use of battlefield information to aid prosecutions in European countries. Within the EU, the Netherlands will continue to work to improve information-sharing practices and emphasise the need to act within the bounds of the law when gathering evidence. It is very important to the Netherlands that parties responsible for violating human rights and international humanitarian law be held to account for their crimes. It is vital that no party be permitted to perpetrate such violations with impunity. The Netherlands supports initiatives to promote accountability for all crimes, as this is an important step in ultimately achieving reconciliation in the region.

Detention and supervision: tailor-made solutions

Individuals suspected or convicted of terrorist offences will be detained in special terrorist wings maintained by the Custodial Institutions Agency (DJI). In order to optimally protect society against these individuals, stop the dissemination of radical ideology and prevent 'contamination' within the prison, a tailor-made strategy is required. In the coming period, we will continue to focus on developing interventions related to reintegration and disengagement. In addition, investments will be made in further developing existing evaluation instruments, training DJI staff and fostering the exchange of information between penitentiary institutions and other parties in the criminal justice system. Radicalised individuals to whom special conditions apply, such as banning orders or specialist care, will

⁷ Parliamentary paper 34 746, no. 2.

be monitored by the Dutch Probation Service's specialist terrorism, extremism and radicalisation (TER) team. In collaboration with its partners in the criminal justice network, the TER team will focus on identifying, managing and eliminating risks and on opportunities to prise individuals away from extremist networks and reintegrate them into society. The TER team's strategy should be continued and further refined during the current government's term of office. Finally, the Netherlands will continue to share its expertise on prison-based deradicalisation with other countries in order to boost global knowledge of effective deradicalisation methods.