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**LETTER FROM THE MINISTERS OF JUSTICE AND OF
INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND KINGDOM RELATIONS**

To the President of the House of Representatives of the States General

The Hague, 29 September 2005

In this letter, we inform you of the conclusions of the most recent three monthly National Terrorism Threat Assessment (DTN) and the measures deployed in pursuance of the DTN. We also indicate in this letter how short-term improvements in the response phase following a potential attack could be implemented. Finally we explore the question of the desirability of a public campaign relating to counterterrorism. Your House was recently informed on developments in European anti-terrorism policy.

The current threat assessment

The attacks in London this summer demonstrated once again that there is also a major danger of terrorist violence in Europe. Unfortunately this is also the case as regards the Netherlands. The terrorist threat to the Netherlands is still a substantial one. The appendix to this letter¹ contains an explanation of the significance of this threat level and the system of threat levels employed in the DTN.

Just as at the start of 2005, the threat is primarily determined by domestic terrorist networks whose inspiration stems in part from the jihadist ideology of Al Qaeda. It is also the case, however, that the international aspects of the threat to our country appear in some senses to have taken on greater weight when compared with the start of 2005. This is principally to do with the trans-national recruitment policy of both local and international networks, the international impact of jihadist battle arenas, such as in Iraq, and the implications of the attacks in London, which we mentioned above. Following some foiled attacks and campaigns, which did not result in the deaths of the perpetrators, the attacks in London have confirmed that suicide terrorism and fear of this phenomenon have finally reached European soil.

Apart from the developments in London relating to the attacks there, other events in recent months have also had an influence on the threat assessment for the Netherlands. There was a temporary increase in the threat in July 2005, associated with the proceedings against the Hofstad suspects. Security measures had subsequently to be adopted surrounding some individuals, based on information from the intelligence services. Media reports about the supposed threat against the

¹ Deposited for inspection at the Central Information Point of the House of Representatives.

International sailing event "Sail in Amsterdam" increased social disquiet concerning a possible terrorist threat. The operational services could not confirm any concrete threat against Sail. Finally, the claims and threats attributed to the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigade also had an influence on public perception of the threat. Such statements may be barely credible, but they have a damaging effect because they arouse feelings of fear.

The Netherlands remains a focus of attention for potential terrorists. The military support given by the Netherlands to the international war against terrorism contributes to our country having a high international profile. Involvement in conflicts such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan can potentially influence the operational choices of jihadists and also form a significant source of inspiration for radicalisation. It is important to note here that Dutch efforts abroad, such as those in Afghanistan, are specifically designed to reduce the international terrorist threat. The military conflict in Iraq is, for that matter, also one of the many aspects that can potentially influence terrorists in their choice of targets. A significant proportion of terrorists' efforts are aimed at destroying the West and Western values throughout the world, so that achieving martyrdom is high on their list of priorities. Other factors contributing to our high international profile include the continuing intensive social debate on radicalisation, Islam in the Netherlands and the high profile proceedings surrounding the attack on Mr Van Gogh; at the same time they can permeate through to domestic radicalisation processes.

Processes of radicalisation, such as those undertaken by the suspects in the London attacks, also continue to be a matter of equal concern in the Netherlands. It is now possible to identify these processes among individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds. We are clearly seeing more and more women, as well as individuals of native Dutch heritage who have converted to Islam. What is noticeable is that the socio-psychological processes within radicalisation display great similarities with those at play within sects and gangs of youths. Political-religious culture and intentions of an extremely violent nature add yet a new dimension to this type of recognised social process. Countering radicalisation is a matter of social concern for the Muslim community and society. There are hopeful signs that support is growing within Muslim communities in the Netherlands to address extremism and radicalisation inside their own ranks. At the same time we have to acknowledge that the persistent dynamic of the radicalisation processes has resulted, for some groups of Muslim youths, in the creation of a radical-Islamic counter-culture, which sets itself up against Dutch society and against the traditional, conformist first generation. The birth of a radical counter-movement is a matter for concern because some of these youths might in the fullness of time end up in what we might call the "outfield" of jihadist groups.

Bearing in mind the dynamic of national and international developments, it is unlikely that there will be any downward adjustment in the general threat level in the medium term.

Measures relating to the current threat assessment

The National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb) has prepared a situational description of suicide terrorism and has carried out a quick scan into the possibilities of obstructing suicide terrorists. The conclusion is that countering suicide attacks is difficult, if not impossible. The explosives used are frequently put together from generally available materials, and there is a great deal of information on the Internet about manufacturing bombs. That said, the short-term intention is to try and develop proposals, using the assistance of (international) experts, which will make a contribution towards setting up barriers against suicide attacks.

There is a justified fear that the events in London might result in an increasing polarisation between Muslims and non-Muslims. Any such polarisation remains a continuing source of concern. Policies aimed at reducing the distance between the various population groups must therefore be continued vigorously. The general Cabinet policy, aimed at shared citizenship and social cohesion, as well as countering dropout and the detection of youths, in particular, has an important part to play here. Polarisation can be a contributing factor towards radicalisation. The recent developments again crystallise the importance of a broadly-based Cabinet policy aimed at countering radicalisation processes. The memorandum on addressing radicalism and radicalisation, recently submitted to your House, provides the basis for this and will also form the starting point for a cohesive package of measures, complementing the strategies recently indicated by the Minister of Alien Affairs and Integration in the Memorandum on Resistance and Integration Policy.

More detailed research will be carried out into socio-psychological processes within and surrounding local jihadist networks in order to identify interfaces for potential counterstrategies.

Prison establishments are viewed as being hot spots for radicalisation and recruitment. The organisations concerned have detailed the measures that can be taken in order to counteract recruitment and radicalisation inside prisons. Based on this advice, the Cabinet has decided on a general policy approach of concentrating the detention of individuals with terrorist backgrounds to a limited number of institutions. Depending on individual circumstances, this policy approach may be subject to variation. In addition, individual customised regimes will be developed, taking account of the individual's background and conduct and the risks these might pose. The prison staff who have to deal with this particular group of detainees will be specially trained and instructed for the task. If it proves necessary to establish individual prison regimes for a period in excess of the currently applicable limit of three months, then the facilities for legislative amendment will be used.

All things considered, the changes in the threat assessment facing the Netherlands following the London attacks will lead to some adjustment of particular measures, but do not demand any fundamental adjustment of Dutch anti-terrorism policy.

Measures to improve the crisis response

In recent months, the NCTb, in collaboration with executive and operational services, has developed five scenarios in relation to possible terrorist attacks or incidents in the Netherlands or elsewhere. Three of these scenarios proceed on the basis of a terrorist event in the Netherlands, such as a terrorist attack against individuals, a major attack comparable with Bonfire, or an attack using CBRN material (chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear). The other two scenarios explore the consequences of a terrorist attack or incident abroad with ramifications for the Western world, whether or not combined with a concrete threat against the Netherlands.

Possible measures have been listed for each of the scenarios. The purpose of the summary is to establish a "grid map" of measures. The measures relating to the scenarios are subdivided into 11 areas of attention, including threat and analysis, protecting and securing property or individuals, detection and pursuit, as well as explaining the situation to the public and press and measures to prevent or minimise public unrest or negative reactions. These are measures that are available under

current legislation (such as the Terrorist Offences Act and other sector-specific legislation).

The Cabinet's intention behind this listing of scenarios was to ensure smooth operation of the government response to a terrorist attack, in collaboration with the many organisations that would be involved, in a structured manner. The grid map also has to be viewed as a model requiring continual updating.

Improvement of crisis response

The crisis management organisation was activated following the attacks in London - as indeed happened after the attack in Madrid - (Ministerial policy team, Inter-departmental policy team, escalation at the National Coordination Centre). On a national basis, those with administrative responsibilities were informed immediately about the possible impact of the attacks for our country, as well as about measures that might have to be taken. The current situation was also discussed with the administrations and police in the four major cities, with an exchange of information in relation to measures being adopted.

A working group of experts was convened by the Minister of Internal Affairs to check whether the Netherlands was adequately prepared for an attack comparable with the one in London. This working group consists of representatives of the police, fire brigades, expert accident and disaster assistance agencies, public transport companies, the major cities and some other departments (Health, Welfare & Sports, Public Works & Water Management, and Defence). The working group set out a summary of how the organisation of the Dutch crisis response was currently prepared for a scenario comparable with the attacks in London. This showed that the Dutch crisis response was prepared for such a scenario but also that short-term improvements were possible in the response phase. The working group formulated refinements to the crisis response phase, which will all be implemented in 2005. These include practical improvements, accelerated ratification of arrangements and accelerated implementation of existing plans.

The refinements can be subdivided into the following areas of attention: provision of information, coordination and management, connections, operational services and civil-military collaboration. The most important measures to be adopted are:

- *Information provision*
Following a terrorist incident, emergency services must have information available that is relevant for the safe and adequate performance of their duties. This covers matters such as the risk of a second bomb, the presence of perpetrators among victims, and also the location of dangerous installations, gas pipes etc. Over the next few months, the State, other government departments and emergency services will improve the organisation of information provision at the time of a crisis or threatened crisis. This will be designed so that a better utilisation of modern technology will provide better and faster exchange of confidential information between the State and other national and local government departments, using the private NCC Internet site and otherwise.
- *Coordination and management*
If attacks should occur in a variety of local authority areas more or less at the same time, a coordinated deployment and direction of the crisis response will be required. It might then be desirable to have a nationally operational management team. The National Operational Coordination Centre (LOCC) is presently preparing a description of the necessary and available assistance

from other regions in any such scenario, so this information will already be available if the crisis should occur. The Coordinated Regional Counter-Incident Procedure (GRIP) will be brought up-to-date and applied uniformly across the regions. There will be greater coordination at both local and regional levels with private parties and the public transportation sector, so that measures can be quickly implemented during a crisis to bring public transport to a halt. The emergency services will be provided with national training on "site-specific offence management", which will deal with issues such as the correct balance to be struck between emergency assistance and detection, the selection and prioritisation of victims, and dealing with the role of citizens in situations of emergency assistance. This process has already been commenced in Rotterdam. The police, fire brigade and medical assistance services involved in accidents and disasters will share their scans of the geographical area concerned with each other immediately following an incident, if these might be relevant in promoting the safety of the emergency services.

- *Connections*
The connections (including inter-regional ones) between operational services, Defence, disaster assistance staff, policy teams and private partners are being improved. The possibilities for an emergency communication system are also being explored, with possible connections to public transport and other organisations. During the crisis response phase, adequate communication will still be essential even if GSM networks have gone offline (fully or partially), including communication between interested parties who are not connected to C2000. The solutions to be determined will be based partly on the summary carried out as part of the project Protection of Vital Infrastructure (*Bescherming Vitale Infrastructuur*).
- *Operational services*
With effect from October 2005, the emergency services will be given information and training on working with the protocol for dealing with suspect items such as packages and letter bombs. During the course of 2006, the protocol will have to be fully implemented throughout the operational services. The LOCC will adopt a procedure, in conjunction with the fire brigade, police and medical assistance services involved in accidents and disasters, for the deployment and briefing of volunteer helpers who have not had any service experience but who report spontaneously during the crisis response phase. The police will also make arrangements with Public Transport and Waterways, local authorities, the National Railway and local and regional public transport companies concerning the preservation and transfer of camera footage to assist with counterterrorism.
- *Civil-military collaboration*
Familiarity on the part of the regional authorities with military assistance (and its procedures) and the role of the Regional Military Commander (RMC) must be improved, so that military assistance can be used more quickly and effectively during any crisis. For this purpose, every security region will have a representative appointed on behalf of the RMC. The RMCs and military medical staff and equipment will also be more frequently involved in regional crisis exercises.

We are also continually looking for other ways to improve the crisis response, for example through more intensive contact with the British authorities and officials who

were involved in the response to the attack in London. Regular crisis exercises on a national and international scale, such as the multi-disciplinary exercise 'Bonfire', which took place on April 2005, provide experience that can be used in the field. We will encourage the implementation of crisis exercises, using terrorism scenarios, at the regional level. A scheme has already been set up to provide financial assistance to the regions for this.

Structural improvements, such as those described in the Crisis Management Policy Plan, will make a further contribution to a better crisis response. A crucial element of good crisis management is a system involving central command and authority, so that decisions can be taken at one point. The central control that is needed, at both national and regional levels, is not fully compatible with current legislation. Crisis management is organised at a local level in our country, both administratively and operationally, and contact with the higher levels is inadequate.

Intensive work is going on with partners in the area of crisis response on the refinements and structural improvements we have described above. The refinements we are formulated will be implemented during 2005. They involve practical improvements, accelerated ratification of arrangements and accelerated implementation of existing plans. The House of Representatives will be informed about the results. The structural improvements are explored in greater detail in the progress report on the Crisis Management Policy Plan to be submitted to the House of Representatives in December 2005. Preparation of proposed legislative amendments has been commenced by officials and these will be submitted to the House of Representatives in mid-2006.

Communication and explanation

Following the attacks in London, discussion flared up once more on the desirability of a public campaign on counterterrorism, comparable with that in the United Kingdom. The Cabinet deliberately opted to take account of the need to inform citizens in its elaboration of communication strategies and the public campaign. This also involved looking at experiences and campaigns in other countries. In September 2004, the State Information Service (*Rijksvoorlichtingsdienst*) carried out an analytical needs investigation among the Dutch public in relation to the more detailed implementation of the alert system for counterterrorism. This investigation showed that Dutch citizens did not need a citizens' alert system for counterterrorism. New and accelerated research was carried among the Dutch public following the attack on Theo van Gogh and the attacks in London, to establish how the need for information and communication on terrorism might have changed. The representative investigation was carried out by TNS NIPO in mid August 2005 on the instructions of the State Information Service.

Results of the needs investigation

The investigation showed that roughly half of all Dutch citizens (55%) considered that there was a "moderate" to "very significant" chance of a terrorist attack taking place in the Netherlands in the foreseeable future. This was a substantial increase in relation to September 2004 (25%). The answers to other questions in the investigation also showed that people were more conscious of the possibility of a terrorist attack in the Netherlands than in the previous year, and this was also causing greater concern. Whereas in 2004 terrorism was not yet one of the developments posing significant concern for citizens - in the midst of other topics - terrorism is now the most concerning of all these developments. The likeliest targets

for possible attacks were thought to include Amsterdam (58%) and Schiphol (43%), as well as other major cities or the public transport system.

Many people (69%) indicated that they were on the alert and more aware in their day-to-day lives. A quarter of the interviewees (25%) were actively looking for information and roughly the same proportion indicated that they would no longer contemplate going on holiday to a country that might be at risk (24%). Even in their own country, it was noticeable that people were adjusting the own conduct because of the possibility of an attack: 12% indicated that they avoided crowded places or events, 8% opted for different routes in their cars and 5% indicated that they no longer used public transport.

More than in 2004, citizens indicated a need for information from the government concerning terrorism: the figure grew from 34% to 41%. Of those looking for more information, 32% mainly wanted to know what the government was doing and 23% wanted to know what they could do themselves either during or after an attack. The size of the group that thought the government was not providing enough information grew from 47% to 60%. Confidence in the government's provision of information on terrorism fell, with 51% having faith in the information in 2004, but only 43% now. The full results of the investigation can be found in an appendix to this letter.²

The needs investigation will be repeated regularly in coming years, so as to spot trends in the information requirements and to refine an effective communication strategy and provision of information accordingly. A summary of this investigation is attached as an appendix to this letter to your House.³ The full investigation can be downloaded from the website www.nctb.nl.

Public campaign

The results of the investigation played a part in the decision to embark on a public campaign to inform the Dutch public about terrorism and counterterrorism.

Preparations for such a campaign are already well underway. The most important aim of the campaign is to inform citizens of what the government is doing to deal with terrorism. Another important aim is to increase individual ability to cope and social resistance by offering the public an idea of what they can do.

One important element of the campaign is a public brochure to be delivered on a door-to-door basis. The campaign will demonstrate a clear balance between, on the one hand, increasing knowledge about how the government is countering terrorism and, on the other hand, avoiding raising unnecessary fears among the population. Additionally, calling for the public to be alert has to go hand-in-hand with offering a concrete idea of what can be done in the event of any suspect situation.

For that reason, the government will not be creating any separate national terrorism number for reporting suspect situations, but will instead adhere to the existing numbers (police number 0900 8844, Crime Reporting Number 0800-7000 and the emergency number 112). The NCTb website (www.nctb.nl) went live in mid-September 2005. This site is intended for communication with professional target groups and with the public at large, and will be used for campaign purposes. The State government is developing this campaign in collaboration with the major municipalities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague, and with private partners such as National Railways and Schiphol. In addition to the public campaign, the NCTb you will develop separate lines of communication and explanatory activities for specific target groups such as companies, local government organisations and services. This will include the development of initiatives focused on the Counterterrorism Alert System, countering radicalisation and CBRN terrorism.

² Deposited for inspection at the Central Information Point of the House of Representatives.

³ Deposited for inspection at the Central Information Point of the House of Representatives.

Conclusion

The Dutch government remains alert to every signal that might indicate an imminent attack. At the same time it is investing heavily in countering radicalisation and recruitment. In all of these activities it also wants to prevent any feelings of anxiety being aroused among the population by excessive exaggeration of the threat, or any suggestion of population groups coming into conflict with each other. A flexible and unanimous rejection of radicalism and terrorism by the population is perhaps the most potent response to the threat, as has been shown in Britain in recent months.

The Minister of Justice,
J. P. H. Donner

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J. W. Remkes