

9 October 2007

To: the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the States General
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National Terrorist Threat Assessment 10

This letter contains a summary of the September 2007 edition of the National Terrorist Threat Assessment (DTN). The DTN is drawn up four times a year by the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism. It is primarily intended for the Cabinet Committee on National Security. The DTN is also discussed with the House's Intelligence and Security Services Committee. A summary of the DTN is included in the biannual Progress Report on Counterterrorism. Since the next progress report will not be submitted to the House until the end of November this year, we have chosen this means of informing you of the content of the current DTN. The next progress report will include a summary of the latest DTN and a discussion of the DTN's possible policy implications.

Minister of Justice

Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

National Terrorist Threat Assessment, September 2007

Threat level

The threat level in the Netherlands is *limited*, meaning that the chance of a terrorist attack is currently relatively slight. But compared to the previous reporting period, there have been developments that make an attack in the Netherlands more likely. This is partly due to a growing international influence on the jihadist threat to Western Europe. There are no indications that the Netherlands faces an attack, but there is extra reason for vigilance. Below, we describe the factors underlying this threat assessment.

Terrorism

In early September 2007, police and security services in Denmark and Germany thwarted terrorist attacks by making arrests. Reports had been circulating for some time that Europeans were attending jihadist training camps in the Middle East with a view to carrying out attacks in their home countries. The recent events in Germany bear out these reports. Some of those arrested, including two German converts, were trained in Pakistan. In both the Danish and German cases, terrorist groups from Pakistan were in touch with Western jihadists via the diaspora in the West. This shows that the long arm of Al Qaida now reaches farther than countries with a large Pakistani community like the United Kingdom. At the same time, Western jihadists are again increasingly in touch with leading Al Qaida figures around the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Months before the recent arrests in Denmark and Germany, the UK was struck by two terrorist incidents. In late June, two cars containing explosives were found in London, and an attempt was made to blow up the passenger terminal at Glasgow Airport. The attackers employed both a familiar operating method (parked cars containing explosives) and an operating method commonly employed by jihadists in Afghanistan and Iraq but hitherto unknown in Europe (attacking a target with a moving car). All the suspects arrested are of non-British origin, some of them having been in the United Kingdom for only a short time. The network was local and ethnically mixed, and its members were highly educated. The group's operations were facilitated to a large extent by the internet. The incidents in the UK have no direct consequences for the threat assessment for the Netherlands, since there are no known connections between the suspects arrested in the UK and the Netherlands. The apparently rapid radicalisation and unusual background of the suspects in the UK confirms the unpredictability of the potential threat in the Netherlands.

The continuing internationalisation of the jihad in Afghanistan could harm the Netherlands' international profile. More foreign jihadists are joining the combatants in Afghanistan. The Afghan struggle may have internationalised partly because the Al Qaida core has refocused on Afghanistan, where it intends to support the Taliban and other combatant groups. Other issues that could raise the Netherlands' international profile are its possible hosting of the Lebanon tribunal and controversial pronouncements in the debate on Islam in this country.

Recent developments, especially in Denmark, Germany and the UK, indicate that the threat to the Netherlands posed by internationally oriented networks has grown. The recent cases

also add a new dimension to the possible threat. On the one hand, the threat from Al Qaida, or networks connected to it, is not limited to the Pakistani community in the UK, but extends to continental Western Europe. On the other hand, local, non-Pakistani networks are less autonomous than was previously thought: they allow themselves to be more or less directed by networks in countries like Pakistan. At the same time, there are no indications of an imminent attack. What is more, the networks known to the Dutch security services do not currently give cause for direct concern.

Radicalisation

The police have received slightly fewer reports of possible Islamic radicalisation among the Dutch population than during the previous reporting period. Over the past 12 months, this trend has remained stable. The figures may indicate that young Muslims in the Netherlands are becoming more resigned, as suggested in the previous threat assessment.

The police have received more reports of rightwing extremism than during the previous reporting period, but the incidence of violence has remained fairly stable. There have however been more threats of violence. Notably, some of the fourteen incidents of interethnic violence were committed by or against young people. In most cases, rightwing extremists were the aggressors.

New research by the Dutch Police Academy has qualified the conventional view of *gabbers*. In general, they have a healthy work ethic and do not normally come from broken homes. They do commit more violent offences than other young people. The research also confirms that only a few hundred of them have links to extreme political parties or groups like Blood and Honour. But large numbers of *gabbers* exhibit a high level of xenophobia, hold nationalist views, and express hostility against Muslims, Jews, and people of other races – which is worrying and may exacerbate the tensions between indigenous Dutch and ethnic-minority young people.

Opposition

Resistance

The relatively calm tone in the debate on Islam, as reported in the previous threat assessment, has recently shown signs of pressure. A heated debate has been taking place,

among indigenous Dutch people as well as within the Muslim community, about issues like the attack on the founder of the Committee of Ex-Muslims in the Netherlands, and calls to ban the Koran. But it is unclear what the impact will be in the longer term.

Countermeasures

In the first half of 2007, several persons were declared undesirable aliens because they were linked to terrorist activities, radicalisation or jihadism.