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**Dept. NCTb/Policy and Strategy Department
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Encl. Summary of Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands 12
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Enclosed please find a summary of the 12th edition of the Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands (DTN12), of March 2008. This assessment gave cause to raise the general threat level for the Netherlands from Limited to Substantial, which had been the level up till April 2007.

Formally speaking, DTN12 covers the period from 1 September 2007 to 31 December 2007, though developments occurring as recently as 29 February 2008 have also been incorporated into the assessment.

The DTN is drawn up four times a year by the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism, and in principle covers the preceding three months. It is primarily intended for the Cabinet Committee on National Security. The DTN is also discussed with the parliamentary Intelligence and Security Services Committee, while a summary of the assessment is included in the six-monthly Progress Report on Counterterrorism. Since the next progress report will not be submitted to the House until early June, we have chosen this means of informing you about the content of the current DTN. The next progress report will include a summary of the latest DTN and a discussion of its possible policy implications.

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Minister of Justice**

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Summary of the Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands, March 2008 (DTN12)

In the run-up to DTN12, the possibility of an attack in the Netherlands (as identified in the previous two assessments) increased further. Thanks to the knowledge gained from a number of recent, thwarted attacks in Europe, there is more than ever reason to believe that Western Europe (and thus the Netherlands) is under threat of attack from Pakistan- or Afghanistan-based groups controlled or influenced by core Al Qaida. Since DTN10 there has also been an increase in the unknown threat – that is to say: the threat posed by individuals and groups that have not yet or only recently come to the attention of the European intelligence and security services. These factors have magnified the conceivable threat (especially the international threat) to the Netherlands to such an extent that even though there are no specific indications of an attack, an increase in the threat level from Limited to Substantial is justified. This will bring the threat level back to where it was during the period from DTN1 (May 2005) to DTN8 (April 2007).

Another factor affecting the current threat situation is the Netherlands' heightened international profile as a result of the tone of the debate on the place of Islam in this country, especially since the announcement of a controversial film on the Koran. This summary represents an analysis of the current situation. There is no way of predicting exactly how events related to this film will play out over the coming period.

Terrorism

Increased international jihadist influences

Since DTN10 there has been a growing international influence on the jihadist threat to Western Europe. Arrests in the United Kingdom (June 2007), Denmark (September 2007) and Germany (September 2007) revealed that Pakistan- and Afghanistan-based groups allied to Al Qaida are providing training and sometimes strategic guidance. This was alarming news for the Netherlands as well. In the case of the UK arrests, the international element seemed to be closely linked to that country's Pakistani population.

In early 2008 members of a jihadist network were arrested in Spain. This network, which also consisted mainly of individuals with a Pakistani background, had plans to attack targets in the UK, Germany, France and Portugal, in addition to Spain itself. This is a noteworthy development in that attacks on one European country are now apparently being planned and facilitated in another.

There is also evidence that individuals arrested in Germany (September 2007) were receiving training and guidance in Pakistan/Afghanistan. Although those involved in the terrorist plot in the UK (June 2007) were recent immigrants, they underwent radicalisation mostly in the United Kingdom. The threat was thus still essentially home-grown. A significant new aspect of the threat, which can be observed in the Spanish case, is the practice of 'importing' attackers to Europe from the Pakistan/Afghanistan border region. Any analysis of the influence of elements from Pakistan/Afghanistan must consider that core Al Qaida there has been thought for some time to be experiencing a certain recovery. The growing lawlessness of this border region and the recent influx of experienced jihadists from Iraq (which has become less popular as a theatre of operations) have produced a sizable group of radicals. This group has typically received better and more practical training than the average home-grown jihadist, who generally has to make do with printed matter and the internet for his training.

Unlike local Dutch networks, these jihadists have, as expected, shown less interest in individual targets than in traditional high-profile targets typically favoured by Al Qaida, i.e. sites that have great symbolic value or that offer the opportunity to inflict large numbers of casualties.

In light of what we have learned from the Spanish case discussed above, it can be concluded that the influence from the Pakistan/Afghanistan border region and/or Al Qaida is now being felt throughout Europe. This reinforces the concern expressed in the last two DTNs: the terrorist plots uncovered in the UK, Germany and Denmark were not isolated, chance incidents. Attacks organised by individuals with a Pakistani background or carried out by people trained in that country are now conceivable throughout the European continent, including the Netherlands. Parallel to the increase in the home-grown threat, the international threat is becoming ever more significant.

Although the centre of gravity of the international threat can be found in Pakistan/Afghanistan, there may also be a North African component. In the autumn of 2007 the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), an organisation with an extensive support network in Europe, declared its allegiance to Al Qaida.

Unknown threat on the rise

The international nature of much of the present threat makes it less visible in Europe: radicalisation, network formation and training are occurring abroad, often out of the autonomous sight of the European intelligence and security services. This invisibility can

persist for a time even after foreign terrorists have entered Europe. The shadowy nature of these groups is compounded by the fact that jihadists are now generally more security-conscious and more adept at evading detection.

This lack of visibility, as discussed in earlier DTNs, also applied to the cells responsible for the failed attacks in Germany (DTN6/June 2006: suitcase bombs in trains) and the UK (DTN10/June 2007: car bombs in London). Many of the people involved had only been in the country for a short time and had apparently failed to set off alarm bells within the intelligence and security services.

Thanks to international cooperation, new individuals who could pose a threat to the Netherlands or other European countries have been identified here in recent months. In addition three arrests were made in Rotterdam at the end of 2007, thereby disrupting plans for attacks. Given the nature of the cases discussed above, it can be inferred that the Netherlands also faces an unknown threat.

The Netherlands' international profile

A major motivation for the individuals behind the thwarted attacks in Germany (September 2007), Denmark (September 2007) and Spain (January 2008) was the presence of Western troops in Afghanistan. The Netherlands also fits this profile, especially since the Dutch military mission in Afghanistan was extended. This is a source of real risk for the Netherlands, especially given the Europe-wide orientation of the Spanish network.

The tone of the debate on Islam in this country, as exemplified by the Koran films announced by the leader of the Freedom Party (PVV) and the chair of the Committee for Ex-Muslims, along with controversial photographs by an Iranian-Dutch artist, has generated a great deal of attention in the foreign media (including that of the Islamic world), thus raising the Netherlands' international profile. This media attention has led to the posting of death threats directed against the PVV leader on one of the leading international jihadist web forums. In the context of a discussion of the PVV leader's film, jihadists used this same forum to call for attacks in the Netherlands, which was characterised as an occupying force in Afghanistan.

Unlike the factors mentioned in the previous paragraph, the decision to extend the Dutch military mission in Afghanistan has elicited few reactions from jihadists. Nor has the Netherlands been specifically mentioned in the messages of Al Qaida leaders or of allied organisations. Recent messages from these sources have, however, been explicitly aimed at the people of Europe. Although the hitherto unknown threat in Europe has been directed

mainly against other European countries, it certainly cannot be ruled out that the Netherlands could become a target at a later stage, depending on the success and influence of attacks in other countries.

Networks in the Netherlands

Since DTN8 the situation involving local Dutch networks, which the authorities have known about for some time, has been largely uneventful. Nothing has happened during the current reporting period that would alter this characterisation. An important development that has weakened these local groups is a lack of leadership, on account of the conviction and imprisonment of a number of important figures. The judgment handed down by the Court of Appeal in the case of the Hofstad group in January may have an impact on the relationships within and motivation of the existing networks.

In addition to the threat posed by local networks, there is the risk of an isolated, disturbed individual ('sudden jihad syndrome') or a local network, supported and encouraged by the mass media and instructional material on the internet.

Radicalisation and polarisation

Radical Islamic ideas are also being disseminated by youth preachers who are highly respected by young Muslims. They give talks at various locations, often without the knowledge of the executive board of the local mosques. This increase in activity is mainly visible outside the heavily populated west of the country. The success that this religious circuit has enjoyed in the provinces is due in part to the fact that a number of the active preachers are from there. This observation is borne out by comments on the internet, where complaints are heard that these preachers are few and far between in the big cities. Because of the distances involved, young people in the western part of the Netherlands are less likely to attend lectures in the other provinces.

Further investigation has confirmed observations made in previous DTNs on certain radical tendencies among Dutch nationals of Turkish origin. It has, however, become apparent that radical Islam is, numerically speaking, a marginal phenomenon in this community, though one that certainly merits attention. It is noteworthy that in these circles they are cultivating a system of ideas that closely resembles what is being preached at existing Salafist centres in the Netherlands.

Resistance

Social resistance

All DTNs since February 2006 have reported that resistance among Dutch Muslims to radicalisation and extremism is on the rise. The reactions of various Islamic organisations in the Netherlands to the PVV leader's planned film only confirm this trend. Almost all the leading Islamic organisations have called upon Dutch Muslims to remain calm and not to resort to violence if they feel offended. These organisations realise that violence and polarisation along ethnic and religious lines in the Netherlands will only fuel existing anti-Islamic sentiments. Some Islamic organisations are actively attempting to neutralise the potentially negative effects of the film by approaching leading Muslims abroad. Initiatives have also been taken to prevent the planned boycotts of Dutch products in some Islamic countries. To this end, Dutch Islamic organisations are trying to convey the messages that an escalation would not benefit the Muslim communities in the Netherlands and that the Dutch government and the vast majority of the Dutch people do not share the views of the leader of the PVV. For their part, Salafist groups have called upon their followers to engage in non-violent protests if the Koran and Islam are attacked in the PVV leader's film.

It is worth noting that the many efforts undertaken to boost social resistance and defuse tensions probably tend to appeal to the more moderate wings of the various groups. The likelihood that an individual undergoing radicalisation would turn to violence can be reduced by an increasingly vigilant community. Greater social resistance can also restrict the size of the 'comfort zone' in which jihadists can operate. On the other hand, individuals who are already confirmed radicals and willing to use violence to further their goals may only isolate themselves even further from mainstream society and from their less radical co-religionists, whom they may see as 'weak' and overly inclined to compromise.