



Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding



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Division NCTb
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Encl. Summary Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands 14
(DTN14)
Re DTN14

Dear Ms Verbeet,

Enclosed please find a summary of the 14th edition of the Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands (DTN). The threat level remains 'substantial'.

Strictly speaking, the period covered by DTN14 runs from 16 March to 15 June 2008, though events occurring as recently as 4 September 2008 have been included in the analysis. The DTN is drawn up four times a year by the office of the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and covers the three months since the previous report. It is primarily intended for the Cabinet Committee on National Security. The DTN is also sent to the House's Intelligence and Security Services Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Ernst Hirsch Ballin
Minister of Justice

Guusje ter Horst
Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

Summary of the Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands, September 2008 (DTN14)

DTN14 confirms the continued existence of a conceivable international terrorist threat to the Netherlands as a result of the film *Fitna*. According to intelligence gathered from a variety of sources over the past few months, the Netherlands and its foreign interests are currently among the priority targets of international jihadist networks. A relevant trend is the increasing number of reports about Western jihadists in training camps along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. Being less likely to attract the attention of Western intelligence services, this group could be better positioned to carry out attacks in the West.

The above trends have made it necessary to maintain the threat level at 'substantial', where it has stood since DTN12, signifying that there is a real chance of an attack on the Netherlands. It is impossible to say with any certainty where such an attack might take place, but given their geographic proximity to some of the worst hotbeds of terrorist activity, Dutch political interests in Pakistan and Afghanistan would seem to be the most likely targets.

Terrorism

International threat

In March 2008 the general threat level for the Netherlands was raised from 'limited' to 'substantial'. This was prompted by the growing international threat to Europe as a whole, in combination with the Netherlands' high international profile. Recent developments have made the international threat to the Netherlands more overt. The main reason for this seems to be the film *Fitna*, which jihadists regard as deeply offensive and a provocation. This country continues to be mentioned on international jihadist web forums, and according to intelligence gathered from a variety of sources over the past few months, the Netherlands and its foreign interests are currently among the priority targets of international jihadist networks. As the militants see it, a new attack could revitalise the flagging image of the jihad in the Islamic world, an image tarnished in recent years by the many Muslim civilian deaths in Iraq. There is also a widely held belief among the militants that a retaliatory attack on the Netherlands would be welcomed in wider Islamic circles.

The conceivability of an attack on the Netherlands is reinforced by the growing number of reports of Western recruits, including Europeans, in jihadist training camps run by various terrorist groups along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border.

These organisations often work together. Al Qaida, in particular, is reportedly interested in finding Western recruits who would be willing to carry out attacks in Europe and the United States. These recruits are deemed less likely to attract the attention of Western intelligence and investigation services, and therefore exceptionally well suited for missions in the West. In this connection, the head of the German federal police has expressed concern about some 50 Islamists from Germany who are thought to have spent time in training camps along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border, either at present or at some point in the past. Previous DTNs have already pointed out that groups in this part of the world could use transnational terrorist networks to direct preparations and attacks in Europe.

Although much of the current international threat to the Netherlands can be traced to the Afghanistan/Pakistan border, a threat originating from other parts of the world cannot be ruled out. One potential region of concern is North Africa, where Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is active. Although AQIM would appear to be oriented primarily towards North Africa, it also maintains facilitating structures in Europe.

The Netherlands' international profile

In the present reporting period, issues like *Fitna* have played less of a role in public opinion in Islamic countries than in the period covered by DTN13. Yet the Netherlands' profile among jihadists remains high. Jihadist circles see *Fitna* as proof that the Netherlands, like Denmark, is an active player in what is seen as an unjustified global war on Muslims.

Networks in the Netherlands

Little activity has recently been observed within local autonomous networks in the Netherlands, though some militants here have expressed a desire to take part in the jihad in Afghanistan and Iraq. Networks in the Netherlands with an international component have been similarly quiet, though such groups had always tended to focus more on supporting jihad in traditional conflict zones than on carrying out attacks here.

In a coordinated international law enforcement operation headed by France, an individual was arrested in the Netherlands on suspicion of playing a central role in a

transcontinental support cell for the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which is active along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border and has close ties with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Al Qaida core.

Radicalisation and polarisation

Earlier DTNs have reported that the Muslim community in this country has become more resistant to radicalisation. Political Salafists, too, have become more wary about expressing extremist views, since they generate negative publicity that can undermine the Salafist cause.

Earlier assessments have reported a decrease in Islamic radicalism on the internet, though this trend seems to have since reversed itself. Another development is that some manifestations of Islamic radicalism are now occurring on websites not available to the public. A new bilingual (Dutch/English) Islamist website is now online, enabling radicals to appeal to a broader community.

Resistance

Moderate mosques are increasingly winning back the ground they have gradually lost to the Salafists over the past 20 years. For years the Salafists have aimed their message at young people, and now these mosques are doing the same. One way they are doing this is by offering Dutch-language classes on Islam, which the Salafists have been doing for years. These mosques also put forward young imams with roots in the Netherlands who have a good sense of the problems facing second- and third-generation Dutch Muslims. These younger imams are more familiar with controversial social issues, such as the position of homosexuals and women in Islam, and show a greater willingness to discuss them candidly.

The growing attention to young people shown by mainstream mosques and the prevalence of a wider spectrum of religious viewpoints can undercut the appeal of the Salafist message in the long run.

Countermeasures

A Pakistani terror suspect has been extradited to Spain on suspicion of being involved in a jihadist cell that planned to attack Spain and other European countries. The suspect was initially arrested last March in the town of Breda, as reported in DTN13.