

> Return address Postbus 16950 2500 BZ The Hague

To: the President of the Lower House of Parliament
of the States General
Postbus 20018
2500 EA The Hague

Our ref.
5617469/09

Enclosures
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*Please state the date and our
references in any response.
Please only refer to one case
in your letter.*

Date 11 September 2009
Subject Submission of Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands Summary 18

Pleased find enclosed a summary of the eighteenth Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands (DTN18) for August 2009. The threat level continues to be *substantial*.

The formal reporting period of DTN18 extends from 16 March 2009 to 15 June 2009. However, recent developments up to and including 4 September 2009 are also included in the analysis.

The Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands is prepared by the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism four times a year, essentially relates to one three-month period, and is primarily intended for the Cabinet Committee on National Security. The Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands is also discussed with the Permanent Parliamentary Commission for the Intelligence and Security Services.

The Minister of Justice, The Minister for the Interior
and Kingdom Relations,

Mr Dr E.M.H. Hirsch Ballin Ms Dr G. ter Horst

Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands, Summary, August 2009 (DTN18)

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Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands, August 2009 (DTN18)

Core-DTN18

The threat level in the Netherlands is still 'substantial'. This means that the chance of an attack in the Netherlands or against Dutch interests is still real. During the past reporting period, no concrete indications were found of plans for attacks against the Netherlands and its interests.

International jihadist groups still regard the Netherlands as one of their 'preferred targets'. As a result, the international jihadist threat is still the most important element of the threat to (the interests of) the Netherlands. This threat is linked to the high-level international profile of the Netherlands in jihadist circles. This high-level profile is a consequence of alleged defamations of Islam in the Netherlands and the Dutch military presence in Afghanistan.

During the past year, developments have been observed which confirm the possibility of an attack in Europe, and therefore in the Netherlands as well. This has to do with, among other things, the travelling of European jihadists to and from classic jihadist conflict areas and – since recently – Somalia as well. As reported in DTN17, jihadists returning from these areas may be instructed to carry out attacks in European countries. The possibility of attacks on targets in Europe is also substantiated by arrests of jihadists in other European countries that have taken place in the past year. These arrests indicate that international jihadist groups are still devising plans for attacks on targets in Europe.

Terrorism

International context of the jihadist threat

Developments in the border area between Pakistan and Afghanistan have, for years, had repercussions on the terrorist threat for the Western world. In this region various jihadist groups have been operating, which constitute a continual threat to Western and therefore Dutch interests. The strike power of these groups is determined partly by the freedom of movement they acquire from the authorities in the region. The large-scale military offensive that the Pakistani army started against the Pakistani Taliban in the Swat region at the end of April 2009 is still going on and bombardments have been carried out in the tribal areas for several months now. The offensive and the bombardments have further increased the pressure on the Pakistani Taliban and core Al Qaeda. In Swat some of the Taliban forces were eliminated in a relatively short time and others have fled or gone to ground.

Whether the military activities are a lasting success depends on the extent to which Pakistan manages to set up an alternative security structure in the tribal areas to ensure stability. There is also a real risk that, now the refugees in Swat are returning to their houses, the Taliban will take the opportunity to mix in with the civilian population again. It also seems as if the Pakistani government is only focusing its military efforts on those groups which constitute a threat to the Pakistani state. The death of Mehsud in August 2009 during a bombardment with an unmanned aircraft (so-called 'drones') is therefore an important victory for both the Pakistani and the American governments.

In Somalia, which is another jihadist conflict area, the most important Somali jihadist group, Al Shabaab, is seeking to establish ideological ties with the objectives of international jihadism. Core Al Qaeda regards Al Shabaab as the 'southern front of the international jihad'. There has also been a steady increase in the number of jihadists from the West (which may or may not be of Somali origin) travelling to Somalia for training or to join in the jihadist struggle. It is known that support networks are active in the United States, and possibly in Denmark as well, which recruit young people and help them to join the jihad in Somalia.

There are also indications that jihadists in Somalia are planning attacks on Western targets in Kenya and Ethiopia. The jihadists are thought to want to use such attacks to reinforce their ideological link with the international jihad and increase their sphere of influence in the region. There are also indications that a small group of westerners trained in Somalia have been instructed to continue the jihad in the West. The order is said to have come from the leaders of Al Shabaab and/or people linked to Al Qaeda.

Another jihadist group which forms a constant threat to Western interests, and therefore Dutch interests as well, is 'Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb' (AQIM). This group is mainly active in Algeria and also carries out activities in the border areas of Algeria, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. Recently, the kidnapping of Westerners has become a structural element of the AQIM's approach. This group has now also started making politically-tinged demands in exchange for the release of hostages. The structural nature of the kidnappings by AQIM appears to be increasing the pressure on the security of Westerners in the region. Recently, AQIM has even gone as far as to murder hostages if its demands are not met. During the last review period the organisation killed a British citizen after the British government failed to respond to its demand to release a radical Palestinian preacher imprisoned in the United Kingdom.

The threat of the kidnapping of Westerners, and with that, Dutch citizens as well, continues to exist in other global jihad arenas. For example, the number of kidnappings in Afghanistan has increased during the last review period. These threats – and the occasional direct attacks – aimed at staff of non-governmental and international organisations in jihadist conflict areas are seriously hampering the work of aid organisations and sometimes even mean that the work has to be halted. Moreover, jihadist organisations appear to be focusing their propaganda more strongly on Christian missionary activities and influences.

Threat against (the interests of) Europe

There is still a trend for international jihadist groups to regard European territory as a target area. The reasons for planning attacks are still related primarily to revenge for defamation of Islam and the prophet Mohammed and the presence of troops in Afghanistan, with an additional reason being revenge for what the jihadists perceive as European support for Israel during the military operation in Gaza (28 December 2008-18 January 2009).

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An increased threat level is thought to apply to Germany in particular in the run-up to the national elections on 27 September 2009. There are indications that jihadists want to force German troops to leave Afghanistan by attacking German interests at home and abroad. Although no concrete plans for attacks have been identified, German interests in North Africa in particular, including tourists, are thought to be at risk. The increased threat against (the interests of) Germany fits in with the trends described in previous DTNs. For example, attention was drawn to journeys made from Germany to the tribal areas in Pakistan, the *potential* threat which can be posed by people returning from such areas and the jihadist videos which claim, more and more frequently in German, that Germany is under threat of a terrorist attack.

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Threat against (the interests of) the Netherlands

In line with observations made in past DTNs, the threat against Dutch interests comes primarily from international jihadist networks. These networks still regard the Netherlands and its interests as one of their 'preferred targets' due to the country's military involvement in Afghanistan and the alleged defamations of Islam in the Netherlands. However, there are no concrete indications of possible preparations for an attack by jihadist groups operating at international level against (the interests of) the Netherlands. It is estimated that the jihadist threat against Dutch interests is currently most acute at locations abroad.

The threat presented by local autonomous networks has not changed in comparison to previous DTNs. Currently there are no indications that local autonomous networks constitute a real threat to the Netherlands and Dutch interests. Neither do these networks currently intend to carry out attacks in the Netherlands. The current threat level from local autonomous networks is therefore low. This is due primarily to a continuous lack of leadership and cohesion within the networks in question, a reduced focus on activities (with fewer being undertaken which are actually connected to the violent jihad) and successful government policy. Local internationally-oriented networks, which focus primarily on facilitating the jihad in the classic jihad areas, currently have no intention of perpetrating attacks in the Netherlands.

Earlier on in this summary we mentioned that Western jihadists are being drawn to Somalia. This trend also appears to apply to Dutch jihadists. On 24 July 2009, four people were detained on the border between Kenya and Somalia because they were thought to be on their way to a jihadist training camp in Somalia. The National Crime Squad, under the direction of National Public Prosecutor's Office, has started an investigation. The four are suspected of participation in a terrorist organisation and of preparing a terrorist offence. These four young people have since been released. The National Public Prosecutor's Office is currently waiting for more information from the Kenyan authorities.

Radicalisation and Polarisation

In May 2005 (DTN1) it was reported that there were indications of a growing salafist influence in the Netherlands. This influence has been growing for a number of years. It now appears that the growth of the salafist movement in the Netherlands is stagnating, partly as a result of the increased resilience of Muslims in the Netherlands to the anti-integration message of the salafist centres. Orthodox Muslims also appear to be increasingly turning their backs on salafism. One factor that appears to be playing a role in this development is that, in the eyes of believers, some preachers are not sufficiently applying the doctrines they teach in their personal lives. In addition, the puritanical lifestyle which demands

considerable personal sacrifices, and the limited space for independent reasoning within the framework of salafist doctrine, are causing orthodox Muslims, who were originally interested in salafism, to leave the movement.

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Following on from the previous DTN period, a similarly small number of violent animal rights incidents took place in the second quarter of 2009. Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR) was once again the target. This time the building was daubed with text which referred to the presence of a bomb. Responsibility for the bomb alert was claimed by the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), which had issued a previous statement in March 2009 in which it threatened to bomb the WUR if it did not take its responsibility. An investigation revealed the bomb alert to be a false alarm. This campaign against the WUR due to the animal testing carried out by the university has thereby entered a new phase, given that animal rights extremists have used daubed text to suggest that a bomb had been placed. Other (less serious) illegal animal rights activities took place at supermarkets and a branch of McDonald's. Besides these illegal activities, most of the incidents in this DTN period were legal by nature, with scuffles occasionally breaking out between demonstrating animal rights activists of extreme left-wing and right-wing persuasions. Incidentally, the activities by animal rights extremists cannot be labelled terrorist activities. However, their increased willingness to use violence in recent years has resulted in a structurally raised level of attention from the police and judicial authorities.

Resistance

The previous DTNs painted a picture of increased resistance against extremist teachings within the Dutch Muslim communities. This picture still applies. Partly as a consequence of this increased resilience, the growth of local jihadist networks in the Netherlands appears to have slowed in recent years. The increased resilience to jihadism means the jihadists do not have a facilitating environment.

The growth of local jihadist networks also appears to have slowed due to the fact that, in recent years, radical young Muslims have started engaging in an alternative, non-violent discourse. The discourse in question is that adhered to by the known salafist centres in the Netherlands. In recent years these centres have started speaking out more actively against violence in the name of Islam. In a few cases, extremists who were not prepared to mend their ways were even excluded from the mosque.