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Our reference
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Annexes

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*When answering, please state
the date and our reference.
Please raise only one issue in
your letter.*

Date 7 April 2010
Subject Presentation Summary Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands 20

I hereby present to you a summary of the twentieth Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands (DTN20) of March 2010. The threat level remains unchanged at *limited*.

The formal reporting period of DTN20 runs from 16 September 2009 to 31 December 2009. Recent developments up to the middle of March 2010 have, however, also been incorporated in the analysis.

The Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands is drawn up four times a year, covers in principle a quarter of the year, and is primarily intended for the Council for National Security. The DTN is also discussed with the Committee on the Intelligence and Security Services of Your House.

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

dr. E.M.H. Hirsch Ballin

Summary Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands March 2010 (DTN)

Essentials DTN20

The threat level for the Netherlands remains 'limited'. This means that the chance of a terrorist attack against the Netherlands is relatively small, but that it certainly cannot be entirely excluded. It should be noted in this context that the chance of an attack against Dutch interests is greater in several countries and regions where groups linked to Al Qaida are active. This conclusion arises from the evaluation of the terrorist threat when compared against resilience.

In addition to a considerable international threat there is a rather limited threat from domestic terrorist networks. This is, in outline, unchanged in the present DTN20 when compared with DTN19.

The threat against the Netherlands is contrasted on the resilience side by increased resilience against violence among Muslim communities including to a certain extent ultra orthodox, salafist movements. At the international level, the 'Detroit' incident increased insight into vulnerabilities of the complex chain of counterterrorism and the associated restrictions.

The international context of the jihadist threat

The pluriformity of the international terrorist threat has once more been brought prominently to the fore in the previous reporting period. In the context of various regional conflicts and international theatres of conflict, the world was faced with various terrorist actions, including those in which the perpetrators differed as regards their background. For example, "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)" was involved in a (failed) attack in Saudi Arabia. In November, an American army psychiatrist killed thirteen soldiers at Fort Hood army base in Texas. The prevented attacks moreover showed that *home grown* networks are more active than ever before on American soil. Those active in the field of counterterrorism also had to deal with 'returnees', as became evident from the failed attack against the Danish cartoonist who drew the controversial cartoons in Aarhus, Denmark. Despite the prominent and, as regards background, divergent manifestation of terrorism worldwide, the image of a weakened core of Al Qaida remains unchanged. The financial position of Al Qaida has also been considered as weakened. All of the above does not mean however, that core Al Qaida is no longer able to commit attacks against Europe and therefore the Netherlands.

The plot against the flight to Detroit places the international component of the threat in the spotlights. Although there are overblown propaganda expressions, AQAP can probably be actually considered to be the instigator and organiser of the attempted attack. This AQAP action could, in time, perhaps lead to an increased decisiveness, because (supposed) successes often lead to increased means, persons and motivation becoming available. Other jihadist areas of conflict also show developments that in time could lead to a qualitative change in the threat against the West. The jihadist group Al Shabaab in Somalia for example demonstrates in any case international ambitions. As the fight continues in Somalia itself, the importance of Somalia as area of conflict with a mobilising function or with a function that causes matters such as these to be put on the agenda may increase in future.

The same applies to the jihadist attraction of the areas of conflict in and around Afghanistan. When we look at other relevant jihadist areas of conflict, areas that previously stood out less now regularly come into view. This applies to Nigeria for

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example, where "Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb" (AQIM) confirmed its interest, and to Mali and Niger, where there is cooperation between AQIM and Touareg tribes. It must be noted in this context however, that terrorist networks increasingly less often need a large-scale, quasi state-like base of operations in order to be able to operate. This is also shown by the complexity of travel and residence patterns of jihadists and the cross-border power of jihadist propaganda, such as the case of the influence of ideologist Al Awlaki which can be observed as far as the Netherlands.

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The international profile of the Netherlands remains unchanged in outline. This means that it is mainly determined by the jihadist perception of the debate on Islam in the Netherlands, as well as the role of the Netherlands as ally of the US and Israel, and the involvement in the international, military stabilisation of Afghanistan.

The 'Detroit plot' illustrates that countries, within their own borders, have to take into account the possibility of attacks and attempted attacks that are not aimed against their own country. This risk mainly exists when a country harbours foreign persons/objects that fit well in the terrorists' image of the enemy. This includes aviation, but also for example foreign representations or foreign military bases. The presence of such targets may cause countries to have a so-called *target profile*. The chance of an attack against such targets does not mean that it has a direct effect on the domestic threat level, but it does mean that counterterrorism activities have to take these risks explicitly into account. This certainly applies to the Netherlands as well.

General threat

In a general sense, the foiled attack against the person who created the controversial Danish cartoons demonstrates the remarkable tenacity of jihadists. This means that the threat can rise 'unexpectedly' after a period of relative calm. One of the reasons is that jihadists apply a time frame for combating their enemies that is long in Western perception. Jihadists continuously remind each other, inter alia via the Internet, of the perceived 'enemies of Islam' and the alleged insults to the prophet or his teachings. This perspective can also be relevant to the Netherlands.

Following the decrease in home-grown terrorism in the Netherlands, there is now an increase in home-grown terrorism from America. Travel patterns, arrests and involvement of Americans in areas of conflict where the jihad is fought, show that increasingly more Americans of foreign descent join the jihad. Involvement of Americans in the jihad in itself is not new. What is new, however, is recruitment aimed specifically at the US and planning of attacks elsewhere in the world from the US. After there used to be mainly loners as regards the US, the current generation, by contrast, seems to be more organised and involved in regional jihadist networks. The increase of home-grown terrorism from American soil is in stark contrast with the assessment of several years ago, when the American government was of the opinion that the major jihadist threat against the US was located in Europe and could reach the US from there. This shift underlines, also for the Netherlands, that there are indeed important developments with far-reaching implications despite an unchanged threat level. It simultaneously sends the signal that such shifts in accent can have an effect for the threat assessment in the short term from the perspective of social processes.

Threat against the Netherlands

The threat of domestic networks remains limited as in the previous period. This is related to a lack of leadership, division and to a certain extent with effective counterterrorism. At the same time there have recently been several - unrelated - incidents concerning potential jihadists.

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As a result of the limited threat from core Al Qaida, the threat against the Netherlands from that corner is limited as well. As regards the threat against the Netherlands from jihadist networks linked to Al Qaida, this threat is rather indirect, because the Netherlands has not been an explicit 'preferred target' since DTN19. Although the main terrorist threat against the Netherlands still has a jihadist basis, the less probable, different, sources of inspiration for political violence should not be excluded.

Jihadist Internet

The Netherlands is currently only mentioned in a derived sense in statements from terrorist networks that should be taken seriously. However, the radical Islamic discourse on Dutch-language Internet is indeed on the move. The jihadist translation agency 'At-Tibyan Nederland' ('The Clarification') had a new website, registered in the United States, online for a certain period, between September 2009 and February 2010. New audio and video material was placed on the new website on an almost daily basis, which was supplied by media organisations affiliated with Al Qaida, but also literature, battle songs and preaches of radical clerics translated into Dutch.

The radical cleric al-Awlaki received attention on various Dutch web forums during the previous DTN period. These messages were removed from the Islamic main stream website Marokko.nl for that matter. The online popularity of al-Awlaki on Islamic forums intended for young persons marks the active dissemination of non-Arab language, mainly English-language, jihadist writings or sermons on the Internet.

Polarisation and Radicalisation

The image of polarisation and radicalisation remains unchanged in outline. Studies that devote attention to positive and negative aspects were issued during the reporting period in the context of the debate on integration and immigration. Although crime, youth unemployment and segregation with respect to some groups of persons of foreign descent, which groups are limited in size, remain persistent, there is increased participation in higher education and a growing middle class.

The debate on Islam in the Netherlands remains polarised and could be magnified, in any case in the perception of jihadists, in the coming months in the run-up to the national elections. Against the outlined background of possible big changes to the political power relations in the Netherlands and the increasing polarisation that may result as a consequence, there is a certain risk that the Netherlands will be faced in the coming months with politically-motivated violence. As regards the risks in this area, radicalising loners of differing backgrounds have to be taken into account more than in other situations.

Resilience

When analysing the nature and seriousness of the threat, it is of great importance to also have regard for the manner in which a government, society and specific, relevant population groups therein are willing and able to resist certain threats to

which they are exposed. This resilience is not a constant factor, but subject to changes as a result of specific incidents or more stealthy developments.

The threat against the Netherlands is contrasted, on the resilience side, by the increased resilience against violence among Muslim communities. This is also increasingly the case among ultra-orthodox, salafist movements.

In a ruling dated 2 February 2010, the Supreme Court set aside the ruling of the Court of Appeal of the Hague concerning the appeal with respect to the Hofstadgroep. This ruling was reported in DTN12. According to the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal set requirements that are too strict as regards the existence and structure of criminal or terrorist organisations. By ruling that punishable incitement to hatred only exists if the expressions are aimed against vulnerable minority groups, the Court of Appeal also imposed a requirement that is not supported by law. The Supreme Court referred the case to the Amsterdam Court of Appeal, which will have to reassess the cases as regards the acquittal that was rendered. A new ruling of the Amsterdam Court of Appeal with respect to the points indicated by the Supreme Court could increase the legal resilience of the government.

A person extradited by the Netherlands was convicted in Spain for participation in a terrorist organisation. It concerns a person who, in an operation unparalleled in recent Dutch counterterrorism, was under observation at the start of 2008 because he was allegedly involved in a terrorist network that was broken up earlier that year in Barcelona (Spain). The investigation at the time did not present any specific clues, for that matter, that the person involved intended to develop terrorist activities against the Netherlands itself. This case illustrates that transnational networks can also deploy activities in the Netherlands and that the procedure for study migration is potentially susceptible to abuse by persons with terrorist intentions, among other things. This case also makes it clear that powers of resilience of the Dutch government are related to the powers of resilience of other EU Member States.

At the international level, the 'Detroit' incident showed vulnerabilities of the complex chain of counterterrorism. Extra attention for the lessons of the Detroit plot, such as increasing the effectiveness of the exchange of data, could lead to hardly any decrease in resilience in time. All of the above does not detract from the fact, however, that there is no guarantee of security in modern, open societies despite all efforts.

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