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Concerning Presentation of Summary of 22<sup>nd</sup> Terrorist Threat Assessment  
Netherlands

I hereby present you a summary of the twenty-second Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands of September 2010. The threat level continues to be *limited*.

The official reporting period of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands is from 1 April 2010 up to 1 July 2010. Recent developments up to 25 August 2010 have, however, also been included in the analysis.

The National Coordinator for Counterterrorism prepares the National Terrorist Threat Assessment four times a year. In principle, it covers one quarter, and it is initially intended for the Council for National Security. The Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands is also discussed with the Committee on the Intelligence and Security Services of your House.

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

## **Summary of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands of August 2010**

The threat level in the Netherlands continues to be 'limited'. Recent developments in the Netherlands and abroad broadly endorse the trends that were outlined in the previous Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands. The profile of the Netherlands continues to fit the international jihadist enemy image (see also the 21<sup>st</sup> National Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands). In this context, it is a fact that the risk of terrorist attacks on Dutch interests, as a part of Western interests, has been higher for some time in areas close to jihadist hotspots including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, North Africa, Somalia, and the Arabic Peninsula. A broad range of countries are in a state of ferment, as a result of which the threat assessment has become vaguer. It is not possible to designate a specific country where the threat against Dutch interests is highest. In the countries mentioned above, franchising organisations and groups related to the core of al-Qaeda and groups who feel a bond with the core of al-Qaeda or its ideology do not only have the desire to damage Western interests, but they also have the capacity. No concrete indications of attacks against the Netherlands or against Dutch persons or objects abroad were, however, identified in the past few months. Terrorist activities against the Netherlands and its interests can, however, not be excluded in the near future. In particular the jihadist developments in various countries outside Europe continue to be cause for concern.

The threat in the Netherlands does not so much stem from internal networks, which are leaderless and hardly target-oriented, but from transnational networks and from persons who have returned from jihadist areas of conflict where they trained or gained combat experience. Dutch nationals abroad should furthermore be aware of the scope for action of groups related to the core of al-Qaeda through 'franchising' or who are inspired by the ideology of the worldwide jihad. In their own countries, they have the willingness and the means to strike at westerners by means of abductions but certainly also by carrying out attacks. This was shown once again by the assassination of the Frenchman who was abducted in Niger, and by the bomb attacks in Kampala (Uganda) during the FIFA World Cup Final of 11 July 2010.

### **International context of jihadist threat**

The freedom of movement and the scope for action of the core of al-Qaeda have been under pressure for some time. It is expected that the whereabouts of the core of the organisation are in the mountainous border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In addition, leaders have been eliminated by continuous attacks with so-called 'drones', unmanned aeroplanes. On 21 May 2010, for instance, an important operational leader of the core of al-Qaeda was killed after an attack with an unmanned small aeroplane in Pakistan's Tribal Areas (see also the 21<sup>st</sup> National Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands).

The jihadist ideology continues to be disseminated through the Internet. Once again, several of the most important international jihadist websites disappeared in July 2010, possibly because they were 'removed from the air' by third parties. In July, the new digital jihadist magazine *Inspire* appeared. This is an online English magazine with a professional look featuring articles glamorising the jihad and practical tips for waging the jihad. With this magazine, 'al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula' (AQAP) is trying once again to inspire potential terrorists outside the Arab-speaking world. This is also the aim of Adam Yahya Gadaah, a spokesman

for the core of al-Qaeda originating from the United States of America (US). On 20 June 2010, Gadhafi addressed President Obama in a video message. In forceful language, he threatened to carry out new attacks if the US did not withdraw from Islamic countries. In this message, Gadhafi alluded to making large numbers of victims to avenge the dead of those who would die in Islamic countries through American actions. Gadhafi's words also appear to be intended to encourage American home-grown extremists to perform terrorist acts. The past few years have shown that some people – both in countries with a predominantly Islamic population and in secular Western countries – were inspired by the jihadist propaganda and that some of them were willing to put their ideas into action.

### **International threat**

Although the scope for action of the core of al-Qaeda has strongly been reduced, franchise organisations and other groups motivated by the core of al-Qaeda continued or sometimes increased their activities. It is notable that it was the first time that the Somali al Shabaab claimed an attack that had been carried out outside its own country. Although this organisation has not been recognised as a branch of the core of al-Qaeda, it does place its actions in the context of the global jihadist fight. On 11 July, the organisation attacked two locations in Kampala (Uganda) during the FIFA World Cup Final, leaving 79 people dead. With these attacks, the organisation carried out its earlier warnings to Uganda. Uganda supplies the majority of the African troops in the Somali capital of Mogadishu that lend support to the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia which is opposed by Al Shabaab. Targets of the suicide bombs were an Ethiopian restaurant and a rest area for the Ugandan elite and ex-pats from the British Commonwealth. In *Iraq*, 'al-Qaeda in Iraq' (AQI) was hit by the elimination of several prominent leaders on the one hand, but on the other hand, a revival could be seen in the number of attacks in the past reporting period. The political impasse that was formed after the parliamentary elections in March 2010 has reduced the chance of a unanimous and decisive government, which may have a negative effect on the security situation in the country. In *Yemen*, the government appears to be mainly worried about the oppositional 'Southern Movement' and, so far, it has not been successful in combating AQAP. In addition, the discontent among the population about American assistance in combating the AQAP has increased, mainly because the attacks with unmanned aeroplanes have inflicted civilian casualties. The threat against westerners and Western institutions in the country appears to have increased. In *North Africa*, 'al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb' (AQIM) tried to strengthen its position and influence outside Algeria in the entire region through the Islamic Maghreb. Outside Algeria, AQIM is in particular active in Mauritania, Mali, and Niger. In addition to carrying out attacks, abductions of westerners appear to have become more and more AQIM's standard modus operandi. Notable in this context is a call to AQIM on a jihadist website to exchange hostages for Mohammed Bouyeri, the murderer of Theo van Gogh who is detained in Vught. This call does not necessarily lead to an increased threat of abductions of Dutch nationals in particular, but his release could be used as a demand if Dutch nationals were abducted. In *Morocco*, a cell of a transnational group of 24 persons was arrested at the end of April on suspicion of recruiting and preparing attacks. A connection with al-Qaeda is suspected. In *Indonesia*, the notorious terrorist Abdullah Sunata was arrested. He belongs to the so-called 'Aceh group', of which more than sixty members have been detained by now. He is suspected of having planned an attack on the Danish Embassy in Jakarta, in revenge of the Mohammad cartoons published in Denmark in 2005.

Pakistan and Afghanistan continue to be of vital importance to countering terrorism, because parts of those countries continue to be safe havens for jihadists. In *Pakistan*, the government had some successes in its fight against the Pakistan Taliban, but it is uncertain whether these successes will have any influence on the organisation's scope for action. The situation is rather that the Taliban have moved to areas where government pressure is less strong. The terrorists often return to areas that had previously been attacked by the Pakistan army. Apart from this, there are indications that the floods of August have contributed to social unrest in Pakistan, which may have a negative influence on fighting extremism in the country. Although aid currently seems to be organised relatively adequately, there are deep feelings of distrust and discontent of the federal government and politicians. It is conceivable that extremist organisations will abuse the emergency situation. It is possible that they return to areas they were previously forced to surrender, because the army may give priority to the provision of aid over fighting extremists. They could furthermore recruit among persons in need of help. This partly depends on the degree in which the jihadist organisations have the capacity to provide emergency aid themselves. In addition to this, there have been signs of other jihadist terrorist groups surfacing in this country. In *Afghanistan*, the situation resembles more and more a stalemate: the Afghan Taliban cannot be beaten, but neither can they conquer the entire country. The positive development is that the Taliban no longer seem to be willing to allow the core of al-Qaeda to assume a powerful position in Afghanistan.

In Europe, the transnational jihadist networks continue to be active. Notable in this context are the developments in Bosnia and Norway. In *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, a bomb exploded near a police station in Bugojno, Central Bosnia. One police officer was killed and five persons were heavily injured. The attacker was an extremist who admitted to be part of a larger group, which is possibly associated with the old network of Islamic extremists Aktivna Islamska Omladina (AIO, Active Islamic Youth). The attack disturbed the long period of relative peace. It remains to be seen whether it was an incident or the beginning of a series of violent terrorist attacks. In *Norway*, two persons were arrested on 8 July on suspicion of preparing an attack. A third suspect was arrested in Germany and extradited to Norway. They had been under surveillance for some time. This plot is notable, because – compared to other Scandinavian countries - there hardly seemed to be any jihadist activity in Norway. The composition of the group is also remarkable: an Uyghur, an Uzbek, and a Kurd. The group is possibly part of a transnational network. Norway may be of interest to jihadists on account of Norway's presence in Afghanistan or on account of an association with the Danish cartoon crisis (a small Norwegian newspaper published the cartoons). Al-Qaeda leader Abu Yahya al-Libi issued threats on this account in 2006. It may also have been a so-called opportunist target.

### **Threats against the Netherlands**

The Netherlands still has a high international profile, which means that jihadists regard the Netherlands as an attractive and legitimate target. The Netherlands continues to be in the picture because of the alleged suppression of Muslims by the Dutch government and statements which are perceived as being anti-Islam. Mr Wilders, leader of the Party for Freedom (PVV) received much international attention as a result of different statements and intentions, such as his recent proposal to call Jordan 'Palestine' in the future and the PVV's aim that was expressed recently to cooperate with like-minded groups and individuals at the international level. There was also wide international media coverage of PVV's victory at the elections and a possible role in the formation of a new government,

of the announced speech Wilders will deliver in New York on 11 September 2010 against the establishment of an Islamic cultural centre and mosque near Ground Zero, and of statements Wilders made in a contribution to the English-language website muslimsdebate.com, in which he called on Muslims worldwide to free themselves from Islam. Several of these subjects were discussed on a popular jihadist website without actual threats being made on the website against the Netherlands or against the PVV leader. The PVV leader and Hirsi Ali were, however, mentioned on a hit list of persons in the jihadist internet magazine *Inspire* (see above) titled *The Dust Will Never Settle Down*, accompanied by an illustration of a pistol.

The Dutch military mission in Uruzgan, which has ended by now, is still contributing to a high international profile. As stated in the 21<sup>st</sup> Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands, the Dutch withdrawal from Uruzgan will not immediately result in a lowering of the profile. The Netherlands will continue to be associated with the perceived fight of the West against Islam for a long time. Moreover, other European also have high international profiles. The profile of the Netherlands may also be influenced by measures in other European countries. The ban on minarets in Switzerland and the intended ban on face-concealing garments, for instance, in countries like Belgium and France contribute to the existing image some people in Islamic countries have of Europe as a Muslim-unfriendly continent. This may have an effect on the image of the Netherlands.

Domestic jihadist networks have been weakened for some time, among other things because of the lack of good leadership, internal disagreements, and the effect of government action. These networks currently pose hardly any threat. The threat is rather expected from transnational networks that are active in the Netherlands or to which Dutch residents are associated. This association may be in the form of contacts or support, but also by travelling to jihadist arenas to follow training courses or to participate in the fight. There is a risk that such persons return to continue their jihadist activities here. In the past period, the authorities once again identified several Dutch nationals who are suspected of becoming active in jihadist areas of conflict or of having the desire to do so. Quantitatively, it concerns a very limited number of people. So far, only a very limited number of 'returnees' have been identified in the Netherlands. In addition to this, not every returnee necessarily forms a threat.

In July 2010, two new Dutch jihadist sites appeared. One site features dozens of Dutch translations of articles of jihadist ideologists, but also a few YouTube videos with songs (nasheeds) subtitled in Arab and Dutch about the jihad in Afghanistan and Somalia. The other site is mainly directed towards the work and life of the Egyptian jihadist ideologist Savyid Outb (1906-1966). The websites may be new, but their contents and form do not differ greatly from already existing sites. They show that there are still Dutch-speaking individuals and groups that attempt to disseminate jihadist ideology through the Internet. The articles also emphasise that these jihadists are oriented to classical areas of conflict abroad and not to the Netherlands (or Belgium).

### **Violent radicalisation and polarisation**

In general, few incidents occurred involving violent radicalisation in the Netherlands. There continues to be a breeding grounds for radicalisation among different groups, though. A recent study, for instance, painted a worrisome picture of the Somali community in the Netherlands. The researchers identified many problems in many different areas, including the following: socio-economic position, integration, relative isolation, crime, drugs use (khat), family and generation-related problems, and psychological health as a result of war experiences in the country of origin. Some young people appear to be receptive to orthodox movements in Islam and there has been evidence of jihadist sympathies. Although concrete indications of violent radicalism at group level have not been identified so far, the development is cause for concern, also because of the attraction the jihad in Somalia seems to hold for a limited number of young people in Western countries (including the Netherlands). In addition, the Somali community in the Netherlands is growing again on account of family reunification, after many years of decrease. Between 2001 and 2008, the Somali population decreased from approximately 29,600 to approximately 19,500 to subsequently increase again to nearly 27,000 in 2010. The decrease was mainly caused by onward migration to the United Kingdom. The same study also revealed that there is a breeding ground for radicalisation among Pakistan, Kurdish, and Moluccan population groups as well. In some cases, this could even result in extremism.

### **Resistance**

Resistance against violence out of political or ideological motives remained high among the Dutch population. A potential trigger event as the Israeli military action against a Turkish cargo ship off the Gaza coast on 31 May 2010 caused fierce reactions on the Internet, for instance, but did not result in violence.

### **Counteraction**

More and more information has become available about the effectiveness of deradicalisation programmes that have been conducted particularly in countries with a population of mainly Muslims for several years. These programmes are often criticised, in particular when it turns out that persons who have followed the programme become involved in terrorist activities again. This is true for one out of five ex-Guantanamo Bay prisoners, who followed the Saudi rehabilitation programme. A recent study into these programmes show that they may be effective if a number of preconditions are met. What is most important is that the programmes must be individualised, both adjusted to the specific context that differs by country and to the circumstances of the individual.

With respect to the legal countermeasures in the Netherlands, a limited number of foreign nationals were declared undesirable in the past few months as well. In this period, no removals were registered in this connection (there may be some lapse of time between the pronouncement of undesirability and actual removal).

A number of legal proceedings are worth mentioning. An alleged facilitator of al Shabaab, a Somali who was arrested in November in an asylum seeker centre in Dronten, appealed to his extradition to the United States. In another case, one of the young people who were arrested in July in Kenya because they were suspected of going to Somalia to participate in a jihadist training camp was allowed by the court in interlocutory proceedings to await the appeal proceedings against his removal to Morocco in the Netherlands.