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Our reference
5727236/12/NCTV

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reference in your reply. Please
only discuss one subject in
your letter.*

Date 26 March 2012
Subject Summary of the 28th Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands

Please find enclosed a summary of the twenty-eighth Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands of March 2012. The threat level remains 'limited'.

The official reporting period of the 28th Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands is from 20 September 2011 up to and including 31 December 2011. Relevant recent developments up to and including 6 March 2012 have, however, also been incorporated in the analysis.

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

The Minister of Security and Justice,

I.W. Opstelten

Summary of the 28th Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands, March 2012

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Threat level

No major changes occurred in the threat assessment in the past few months. The threat level in the Netherlands consequently remains 'limited'. This means that the risk of a terrorist attack is currently low, but that it cannot be eliminated altogether. The limited threat is posed in particular by the manifestation of international jihadism. As established in the 27th threat assessment, several developments occurred that slightly eased the threat assessment for the West. The strength of the core of al-Qaeda has been mitigated since the death of several of its leaders. The various regional organisations affiliated with the core of al-Qaeda seem currently primarily focused on both the armed and political struggle in parts of Africa and Asia, but the outcome of this struggle is still extremely uncertain. Jihadists may benefit from the political and military developments in some countries, which may result in an increased threat again to Western countries in the longer term. As evidenced by an additional number of arrests in Europe and North America, the jihadist ideology has proved to be still able to inspire individuals and groups to come into action in and against Western countries.

The Netherlands and its citizens are still legitimate targets for jihadists as a result of alleged discrimination of Muslims and perceived blasphemy against Islam and the Prophet Muhammad in our country, and Dutch participation in military or civil missions in Islamic countries. In the 27th threat assessment, it was announced that fewer threats against the Netherlands were placed on websites, jihadist websites and otherwise. In December 2011, however, there was a brief upsurge when threats were placed against Amsterdam and against Dutch diplomatic representations. Dutch citizens and Dutch interests abroad run a higher risk of being confronted with terrorism than persons and objects in the Netherlands itself. This was evident just recently, for instance, when two Dutch tourists were taken hostage: one in Mali by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and one in the Philippines by the jihadist group of Abu Sayyaf.

Jihadist networks in the Netherlands have focused more on the jihad abroad than in the Netherlands. It is worrisome that the number of jihadists travelling abroad to a jihadist conflict area has increased in the past few years, and that they succeeded in reaching their destination more often. They have the knowledge and contacts required to organise new jihad trips from the Netherlands. Upon return to the Netherlands, they are able to enthusiastically urge others to make jihad trips and to assist them in this respect. They are also able to use their acquired battle experience for an attack in the Netherlands. There is currently no concrete evidence of plans for such an attack.

Although jihadism continues to be the principal source of terrorist threat in the Netherlands, vigilance is called for regarding other forms of ideologically motivated violence. It is, after all, conceivable that such violence may also hit targets in the Netherlands, or Dutch interests abroad. After the violent acts committed by Breivik in Norway, other European incidents also showed that this threat is more than a theoretical assumption. In Florence, a sympathiser of neo-fascism shot five Senegalese citizens, of whom two were killed. In Germany, it became known that ten unsolved murders, in particular on Turkish migrants in

the period 2000-2006, had been committed by the Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund, a far-right group. An anarchist group - this time from Italy - sent letter bombs again to targets in Rome, Frankfurt, and Paris.

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Radical groups in the Netherlands continued to act mainly within the limits of the law. In the last quarter of 2011, various incidents were reported involving Islamist radicals and left-wing, right-wing, animal rights and asylum rights extremists, but those incidents were not very grave in nature. The authorities did find weapons in the possession of members of a North Holland right-wing extremist group. The weapons had probably been meant for sale, not for an attack. The resistance against violence based on ideological motives remains as high as ever in the Netherlands.

Core of al-Qaeda and related groups

The strength of the core of al-Qaeda was further reduced in the past period due to the elimination of several fighters and senior members, mainly through air raids. Its leader, al-Zawahiri, has called on jihadists in the Middle East and North Africa to seek alliance with political developments in order to realise the Islamic state. The threat from the core of al-Qaeda against Europe is still present, as evidenced by the arrests of jihadists in Düsseldorf in April and December 2011, but it appears to have decreased substantially in the past few years. The threat against Western countries from organisations related to the core of al-Qaeda also seems to have decreased. The involvement of those organisations in the various incidents and interrupted actions in Europe in 2011 has rarely been established. Jihadist propaganda, as it is spread through the Internet, has influenced the way of thinking of some Muslims in Western countries. With the elimination of al-Awlaki and Samir Khan in September 2011, however, English-language propaganda seems to have suffered a severe blow: since that time, the Internet magazine 'Inspire' has no longer appeared on the Internet.

Although the influence on the West currently appears to be limited, the situation in various countries where jihadists have been active continues to be worrisome. In *Pakistan*, extremist groups have probably taken advantage of the temporary decrease in the number of bombings to regroup and prepare new campaigns. In *Afghanistan*, the United States and the Taliban have begun making overtures at the negotiation table. The violence nevertheless continued. The insurgents currently aim their actions in particular against the Afghan authorities. ISAF troops have become a secondary target. AQIM in *North Africa* continued its efforts to acquire more weapons, and was active in abducting foreign nationals. In *Egypt* a new jihadist group has been active in the Sinai. In Yemen, the position of AQAP (Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula) in the south, where it is engaged in fights against government troops, has become stronger and stronger. There have also been indications that the conflict in Yemen has held an increasingly greater attraction for foreign jihadists. This also applies to al-Shabaab in *Somalia*, which has perhaps attracted the most foreign jihadists. This group is under great pressure, which is due in particular to the Ethiopian and Kenyan intervention. The terrorist threat in its neighbouring country Kenya has increased; there were several attacks, one of which was claimed by al-Shabaab. The armed conflict in *Syria* is still going on; reports about the involvement of jihadists have been ambiguous. As a result of the developments in the above-mentioned countries, the risk of Dutch citizens and Dutch interests being confronted with jihadist terrorism in those countries is greater than in the Netherlands. This increased risk

was emphasised, in the period under consideration, by the abduction of Dutch tourists in Mali by AQIM (on 25 November 2011) and in the Philippines by Abu Sayyaf (on 1 February 2012).

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Europe and North America

In Europe and North America the threat of terrorist and extremist violence continues to be present. In the past period, there were no jihadist attacks, with the exception perhaps of an attack by unknown persons with a Molotov cocktail against the French satirical magazine 'Charlie Hebdo' on 2 November 2011. Nobody was hurt. Shortly before the attack, the magazine had announced it would publish an edition on Muslims in Libya and Tunisia, with the Prophet Muhammad as fictional editor in chief. The attack was not claimed by anybody, which makes it impossible to establish whether jihadist motives played a role. Various arrests made in the United Kingdom, the United States, Spain, and Germany - which may have prevented possible jihadist actions - clearly show that jihadists still focus on Western countries.

In the area of right-wing extremism and left-anarchistic violence, incidents occurred in various countries. A sympathiser of neo-fascism shot five Senegalese citizens in Florence on 12 December, and he killed two of them. Italian anarchists sent letter bombs to targets in Frankfurt, Rome, and Paris. One person was slightly injured. In addition, there was another example of 'spree shooting', when a man in Liege killed four random people with hand grenades and a firearm, after which he committed suicide. The attacker did not leave a single explanation for his act. The Dutch violent individuals Tates (Apeldoorn 2009) and Van der Vlis (Alphen aan de Rijn 2011) also did not leave any note behind revealing a clear motive. Anger against society or the state, a fascination for weapons, and psycho-social problems often play a role in such violent acts of individuals. Although these acts do not concern extremism or terrorism in the traditional sense of the word, there are important similarities as regards form of violence, targets, and social unrest.

Threat to the Netherlands

The limited terrorist threat to the Netherlands is still related predominantly to international jihadism. There are no indications for any terrorist threats against the Netherlands from other ideological groups. The Dutch profile among jihadists has remained as high as ever. The Netherlands has continued to be the target of jihadists, being regarded by them as a country that is hostile to Islam, discriminates against Muslims, allows Islam and the Prophet to be offended, and participates in military or civil missions in Islamic countries. In the 27th threat assessment, it was established that the attention for the Netherlands on jihadist websites appeared to have faded. In the past period, however, there was a brief upsurge when new life was breathed into a rumour that was first spread in 2008. The Netherlands had allegedly allowed an erotic film about the women of the Prophet Muhammad to be published. This resulted in a threat against Amsterdam on an important jihadist forum, in threats on Facebook against Dutch diplomatic representations, and in four demonstrations at the Dutch Embassy in Tripoli. The attention subsequently faded away rapidly. These incidents show that activities that are allegedly offensive to Islam may quickly have a strongly mobilising effect and may result in different actions, both virtual and physical, in various countries. Dutch citizens and Dutch interests abroad may be confronted with these actions.

Jihadist networks in the Netherlands are focused more on the struggle in the jihadist conflict areas abroad than on waging a jihad in the Netherlands. In this context, the attempts of Dutch jihadists to reach those conflict areas are worrisome. The number of jihad travellers has increased in the past few years, and they have reached their destination more often. In addition, areas other than Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Somalia have become increasingly more popular as destinations. Some jihadists have attempted to join militias in countries such as Libya, Egypt, and Syria. They constitute a threat to Western interests in those regions. In addition, the danger exists that they will apply the knowledge and experience gained abroad in the Netherlands after their return. The jihadists who have returned currently emanate a limited threat.

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Radicalisation and Polarisation

Various radical and extremist movements made themselves heard in the past period, although no major incidents occurred. In November 2011, Sharia4Holland, the radical Muslim group, disturbed a lecture in 'De Balie' in Amsterdam in an intimidating way. The small group has attempted to increase its number of supporters by adopting a more provocative attitude which is also displayed by its southern equal Sharia4Belgium. The authorities found weapons in the possession of members of the North Holland right-wing extremist group Vanguard/Ulfhednar. The weapons had probably been meant for resale, not for committing an attack. Various incidents were furthermore reported involving animal rights and left-wing extremists, but those incidents were not violent in nature.

Resistance

The resistance of the Dutch population against ideological violence is as high as ever. This is evidenced, for instance, by the small number of extremist movements of various casts of mind. Although Sharia4Holland and Hizb ut-Tahrir have attracted media attention regularly, they remain splinter groups; the same also applies to similar right-wing and left-wing groups. It becomes clear through a search of the Internet that a certain support for their extremist ideas exists. The fact that some people actually want to go further is evidenced by the various times that mosques in the Netherlands are plastered, desecrated, or even confronted with arson every year, possibly by people with right-extremist backgrounds. The incidents concerned are scattered and unorchestrated incidents, which also appear to be decreasing in number. Violent extremist ideology generally triggers hardly any response on the Internet. This does not apply only to the jihadist discourse. The ideas of the Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik, for example, show many similarities with the views of different groups in the Netherlands that fiercely oppose Islam, multicultural society, and the 'left-wing establishment'. The way in which Breivik translated these ideas into extremely violent actions has, however, received hardly any support, not in words and not in actions.

Countermeasures

In the past few months, the Supreme Court ruled in four cases which are part of the so-called 'Piranha Case' against Samir A. and five other persons. The judgments of the Hague Court of Appeal in the Soumaya S. case and the case against Mr Lahbib B. and his wife Mrs Hanan S. were reversed. In the first case, the way in which the Court of Appeal had processed confidential evidence, and had heard an employee of the General Intelligence and Security Service, played an essential role in the ruling of the Supreme Court. In the two separate cases

against the spouses, the core question was whether the spouses knew that they were participating in an organisation with terrorist aims. In the fourth case, that of Nourridin el F., the Supreme Court dismissed the appeal to the Supreme Court filed by the convicted person. In fact, the four have served their sentences by now. El F. was the last of these four persons who was still in prison. He was released on 6 June 2011, after which he left for Morocco. Out of the convicted persons in the Piranha Case, Samir A. is the only person who is still in prison.

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In the past six years, fifty persons were declared undesirable aliens in the Netherlands and 31 persons were removed in connection with terrorist activities, radicalisation, or jihadism. The terrorist threat, in particular from domestic networks, has been limited for some time. This means that measures under immigration law, just like various other counterterrorism instruments, had to be used only to a limited extent. Persons who are engaged in extremist or terrorist activities furthermore usually have Dutch nationality or also Dutch nationality (in addition to another nationality). Taking away Dutch nationality is possible only in exceptional cases, which limits the applicability of the set of instruments under immigration law.