



To the President of the House of Representatives  
of the States General  
P.O Box 20018  
2500 EB The Hague

Date 22 June 2012  
Subject Summary of the Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands,  
June 2012 (DTN29)

Enclosed please find a summary of the 29th edition of the Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (DTN). The threat level remains limited.

The formal reporting period for DTN29 was 1st January 2012 to 19th March 2012, though developments occurring as recently as 5th June have also been incorporated into the analysis.

The DTN is drawn up four times a year by the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV) and covers, in principle, a three-month period. It is primarily intended for the Cabinet Committee on the Intelligence and Security Services. The DTN is also discussed with the House's Intelligence and Security Services Committee.

Ivo Opstelten  
Minister of Security and Justice

## **Summary of the Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, June 2012 (DTN29)**

### **Threat level**

The threat level in the Netherlands remains limited. This means that the chance of a terrorist attack is currently slight, but cannot be ruled out entirely. The threat that does exist is still primarily jihadist in nature. There are no indications that jihadists either inside or outside this country are preparing attacks against the Netherlands.

To a large extent, jihadist networks and groups in the traditional conflict zones (e.g. Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia) determine the external threat to the West and the Netherlands (the exogenous threat). They may target Westerners in the conflict zone or carry out attacks in the West itself. In the eyes of jihadists the Netherlands remains a legitimate target on account of alleged discrimination against Muslims, perceived insults to Islam and the prophet Mohammed, and the Netherlands' participation in various missions (including military missions) in Islamic countries.

Jihadists in the Netherlands are more focused on fighting in existing conflict zones than on engaging in violent struggle in the Netherlands. An ongoing cause for concern is the increase in jihadist departing for jihadist conflict zones in recent years, with some managing to reach their intended destination and a few even succeeding in assuming important positions. Moreover, it cannot be ruled out that individuals in the Netherlands will become radicalised to the point where they are prepared to commit violence in this country. In a relatively new trend, contact between jihadist and radical Islamist groups has blurred the boundary between the two. There are no indications of a terrorist threat arising from an ideological motive other than jihadism, but obviously, it is important to stay alert. All things considered, the internal (or endogenous) threat is becoming more diffuse.

### **International context**

The al Qa'ida core has lost operational capability following the death of some of its leaders. Yet it would be premature to say that the core group no longer matters or that the threat posed by the jihadist movement has lessened. Certain key figures act as links between various jihadist groups and networks, thus creating a network of individuals who are both willing and able to prepare or carry out attacks and facilitate jihad. This makes it easier for Western jihadists to make their way to and from conflict zones. The al Qa'ida core is part of this 'coalition of international networks'.

The political transition taking place in North Africa and the Middle East is also affecting jihadism in that part of the world. In countries that have been the scene of revolutions, a new dynamic has taken hold whereby jihadist groups and radical Salafists are increasingly active and sometimes openly claim a place in the political arena. In the face of shifting power structures, new opportunities are presenting themselves to jihadist groups, especially where governments have to be less heavy-handed than in the past. Jihadists are involved to a limited extent in the armed conflict in Syria. This country is also emerging as a new theatre of operations in the minds of European jihadists.

### **International threat - development in jihadist conflict zones**

For some time now, the chance that Westerners could fall victim to jihadist terrorism has been greater in the traditional conflict zones than in the West. Jihadists in those areas also pose an ideological and operational threat to the West. This is especially true of conflict zones in or around Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Iraq, the Maghreb, Mali, Niger and Somalia. Owing in part to their situation in these areas remains troubling. Generally, jihadists profit from instability and dysfunctional state authority. For a proper understanding of the threat existing within or emanating from these conflict zones, it is important to recognise the significant differences between jihadist networks and groups around the world, with respect to their strategies, capabilities and (especially) the practical opportunities for striking Western targets. Thus different groups maintain a different geographical focus - (local vs. regional vs. international); indeed, this question is frequently a source of friction between or within jihadist groups. Even though jihadists may wish to launch attacks in the West itself, their focus is more often on local Western targets or government agencies and officials. Because the al Qa'ida core is seeking to capitalise on developments in North Africa and the Middle East, it may prioritise the fight against regimes in Muslim countries.

The situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan remains troubling. Western combatants are present on both sides of the countries' border. Despite intensive efforts over a long period, the balance of power between ISAF and the Afghan Taliban is still not significantly different. The burning of korans at an ISAF base in Afghanistan sparked public outrage, leading to demonstrations (some of them violent), serious riots and a number of incidents in which American service personnel were shot dead by Afghans in uniform. These incidents, which were not initiated by the Taliban, had not only a religious background but also a pronounced anti-American character. The protests were also directed against the foreign presence in the country more generally, a sentiment that was heightened by the shooting of Afghan civilians by an American soldier. Al Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and two other jihadist groups attempted to capitalise on the uprising by Tuareg tribesmen seeking their own state in northern Mali. In Yemen, Al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) intensified its struggle against the Yemeni state. However, AQAP has not lost interest in committing attacks in the West, and the group has reportedly been involved in the abduction of Westerners in Yemen. In Somalia Al Shabaab has joined Al Qa'ida, though support within the group for this decision is questionable, owing to possible disagreement within leadership about whether to concentrate on the local or the international jihad.

The fact that Westerners can fall victim to jihadist terrorism in conflict zones was demonstrated by the abduction of the Dutch tourist Sjaak Rijke in Mali by AQIM (on 25 November 2011) and Dutch birdwatcher Ewald Horn in the Philippines by Abu Sayyaf (on 1 February 2012). The two hostages have not yet been released.

### **International threat - Europe and North America**

There continues to be a terrorist threat to Europe and North America. This is illustrated by the series of jihadist murders committed in France, which came to an end on 22nd March with the death of the Franco-Algerian Mohammed Merah in a stand-off with the police. Merah is held responsible for the murder of three soldiers with a Muslim background and the attack on a Jewish school in Toulouse on 19th March. These events show that individuals who have returned from

jihadist conflict zones can pose a danger in the West. There are, however, no indications of any functional relationship between the attacks and the perpetrator's stay in the Afghan-Pakistani border region. This case does illustrate the threat posed by radicalised individuals and makes clear that statements or actions perceived to be Islamophobic can prompt radicalised Muslims to use violence. The actions of Anders Behring Breivik in Norway and a number of other violent incidents in European countries in 2011 showed that ideologically motivated violence is not solely jihad motivated.

### **Threat to the Netherlands**

The limited terrorist threat against the Netherlands is still primarily jihadist in nature. That threat is diffuse, however, and may originate either outside the country (exogenous threat) or from individuals residing within our borders (endogenous threat). There are no indications of a terrorist threat to the Netherlands involving other ideological motives, but obviously it is important to stay alert.

In the eyes of jihadists the Netherlands remains a legitimate target on account of alleged discrimination against Muslims and perceived insults to Islam and the prophet Mohammed in this country. In addition, the Netherlands' past military involvement in Afghanistan and the current police training mission have helped raise the country's international profile. Between January and March 2012 the Netherlands attracted a certain amount of attention in the mainstream Arabic-language media and on international Islamist and jihadist websites, due to the government's 27 January proposed ban on clothing that covers the face (the 'burqa ban'). In February and April 2012 Mohammed B. was described on a jihadist site as a hero to Muslims. In addition, in April and May, the release of Geert Wilders' book was reported on, in a largely even-handed tone, by the mainstream media in Muslim countries.

There are a limited number of jihadists operating in networks. These networks are generally loosely organised and are largely inactive, due to various factors, including a lack of strong leadership. Furthermore, Dutch jihadists focus more on jihadist conflict zones abroad than on waging jihad in and against the Netherlands. As described in previous DTNs, there has been a troubling increase in the number of jihadists from the Netherlands who are travelling abroad, and in the percentage of them who reach their intended destination. A number of them have even assumed important positions in foreign groups, a development that could eventually have repercussions for the Netherlands. Jihadists with a knowledge of this country are, among other things, better placed to prepare and carry out attacks here and can serve to attract jihadists living in the Netherlands. Furthermore, it cannot be ruled out that individuals will become radicalised to the point of committing violence. In a relatively new trend, contact between jihadist and radical Islamist groups has blurred the boundary between the two. In March an operation by the Dutch authorities succeeded in thwarting potential jihadist activities. All things considered, the internal (or endogenous) threat is becoming more diffuse.

### **Violent radicalisation and polarisation**

Various radical and extremist movements have attracted notice between January and March 2012, although no major incidents occurred. There were very few activities involving left-wing and asylum-rights extremists. There are no concrete

indications in the Netherlands that known right-wing extremists are moving in the direction of terrorism. It is important to be vigilant with regard to right-wing extremists on account of their fascination with and, in some cases, ownership of weapons. There is still a general risk that the combination of right-wing extremist ideology and the possession of firearms could lead to ideological violence.

**Resistance**

The resistance of the Dutch public to ideological violence remains high. Arrests in March 2012 show that the Dutch authorities may be able to disrupt jihadist activities at an early stage.